The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR PHYLLIS E. OAKLEY

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: To start with, tell us about where and when you were born and something about your childhood.

OAKLEY: I have always said that I am a product of the Middle West. My whole family is from Nebraska and both my parents were born in the same little town, West Point, in the eastern part of the state. I was born in Omaha in 1934 and we moved shortly afterwards to Lincoln. My father had just been hired by the Rawlings Sporting Goods Company, which makes basketball, football, and baseball equipment, as a salesman. When he was promoted and given a new territory, we moved to Columbus, Ohio where we lived from 1939 to 1943.

My mother was a math and chemistry major at the University of Nebraska and became a high school teacher of both subjects. When she married she, of course, had to quit, which was the norm in those days. During WWII, she was recalled when all the male math and chemistry teachers were drafted.

Before joining Rawlings, my father had been a high school coach and American history teacher. He also graduated from the University of Nebraska, where he had been a star athlete. My father's family had migrated to Nebraska right after the Civil War from Pennsylvania; they were Pennsylvania Dutch. My mother's family was German from Prussia, and had immigrated after Bismarck expanded conscription in 1870. Many of that family stayed in Wisconsin; others went further west to Nebraska. My maiden name is Elliott, which came from Scotch-Irish ancestors who came through the port of Philadelphia in the early 1800s, as many leaving Ulster did. That first Elliott forefather married into a Pennsylvania Dutch family, which had immigrated probably in the mid-18th Century and had fought in the Revolutionary War. The fact that this surname has two Ls and two Ts indicated that the family had come from the Scottish lowlands, and probably then on to Northern Ireland, and not from England.

I had one brother, who was four years older. He was very much like my mother's family and interested in machines, so he went to Purdue and became an engineer. My father's family had always been interested in politics and in public affairs. My grandfather Elliott was for a while the county attorney of Cumming County, where West Point, the little town both my parents were from, is located; he came West after the Civil War to teach school. He had graduated I think from a small Pennsylvania college or maybe the University Of Pennsylvania and had studied law with an older relative to become an attorney. One year, he ran for Congress as a Republican, but lost, probably in a William Jennings Bryan landslide. This small town, West Point, has always reminded me very much of River City o"Music Man" fame. It had two or three thousand inhabitants principally from three ethnic groups: the Scandinavians, the Germans and the Bohemians. The town was split in two by religion: the Protestants (Scandinavians and the northern Germans) and the Catholics (southern Germans and the Bohemians). My family was all Protestant.

There are wonderful stories about the little town of West Point. My grandfather did not have a great many educated friends. He and the Catholic priest were probably the two most educated men in town and in the evening they liked to sit on the front porch to discuss affairs of the world. The fact that a Protestant and Catholic seemed to have such good rapport raised some concern in the town! They were told not to continue!

In the late 1990s, Bob and I were invited to Katherine Graham's 80th birthday party. We had been friends for many years in Washington. Warren Buffet, who was a major investor in Graham's Washington Post, was also at the party. He had helped the Grahams with financial and business advice, as Katherine Graham noted in her autobiography. I was anxious to meet Buffet again because his mother and mine had grown up across the street from each other in West Point. His sister had been in college at the same time I was, so our two families have had some connections over the years. During the party, Buffet and I conversed about our old houses and families. He told me that his grandfather was the publisher and editor of the West Point Democrat - I told him that my grandfather had been the editor and publisher of the West Point Republican. We all roared with laughter and wondered about flapping wings overhead!

Back to the main narrative - by the end of 1942, all athletic equipment manufactured in the United States was commandeered for the armed forces and that made salesmen surplus. Athletic teams of whatever sort had to make do with what they haMy father was moved into the home office of Rawlings, St. Louis, Missouri, and we moved there in the summer of 1943. During the war, it was difficult to find houses but my parents found one in a small suburb called Brentwood, which was where I grew up

Q: Tell us a little about your home life.

OAKLEY: My parents were always very active in community affairs. My father knew something about education and did not feel that the schools in Brentwood were very good. So he ran for the school board, served many years, and eventually was elected president. He handed me my high school diploma! He was also very active in the Congregational church; he sang in the choir, and was on the Board of Elders. He also belonged to a variety of boards around St. Louis.

My mother was the president of the PTA, as well as president of the women's church organization. So I grew up in a family that was very involved in its community. My grandmother Elliott, wife of the editor of the West Point Republican, had become a widow in middle age with children to get through college. Through her Republican connections, she was appointePostmistress of West Point, which helped her to finance the college educations of her four sons, though not her two daughters. She was very active in Nebraska's Republican Party and I think at one time she had done some work for Harold Stassen. So my brother and I grew up in an atmosphere which was very positive about involvement in politics at the local and national levels.

I was always fascinated by history and public affairs; at the movies, where we all went a lot, I loved Time Marches On and other newsreels. Our close neighbors pointed out to me one day that the United States had a diplomatic service; I said that I didn't know anything about it. The neighbor contacted her brother-in-law who was a Congressman from southern Missouri and asked his office to have some material on the State Department sent to me. This was about 1946 or 1947 when I was about twelve. I can remember lying on my shag bedroom rug, reading through the sample Foreign Service test that had arrived. I also read about what the life of a diplomat might be. I was impressed by how tough and comprehensive the exam seemed to be and I could not imagine I could never pass it. At the same time, I was attracted by all the interesting aspects of a diplomatic career and decided that I would not forget the Foreign Service as a possible future.

Q: That is very interesting and I think probably a rare exception particularly for people in the Middle West. Let me go back to 1934. Did the New Deal have any effect on you?

OAKLEY: In Nebraska, we were all staunch Republicans. Common expressions included "That man in the White House," meaning FDR. Every time we drove over an overpass on the way to Omaha, my family would curse and grumble about the CCC (the Civilian Conservation Corps), "What a waste of money!" The tracks below were used by one train per day and that, of course, made the project very expensive. When Eisenhower was elected, my mother dashed up the stairs exclaiming that I had never lived under a Republican president!

Q: Did you absorb the Republican family atmosphere?

OAKLEY: Probably so, particularly the fiscal conservative aspect. My family saw many farms and businesses go under but they themselves were only moderately hit by the Depression; they survived, and remained skeptical of government expenditures. The motto was "Eat it up, make it over, and do without" or something like that. The message was that human beings were to use everything they had and not waste or hoard anything. Excesses were frowned upon. Of course, I was a child during WWII when not much was available; we had shoe rationing and had to make do with one or two pair; if one were really fortunate, one had boots also.

With the Depression and during the war, people did not own a lot of extras. All lived fairly Spartan lives by today's standards, but no one seemed to mind and life went on. For the sporting goods business, there was huge pent-up demand that had to be restrained until after the war. But once the restrictions were lifted, business just took off with major sales to teams, groups, and individuals. Customers became very competitive; they would stand in long lines to buy team uniforms and equipment. It was then that I first began to see corporate gifts and some hints of luxury.

Q: I think that for many of us, WWII was the greatest geography lesson that we could have. Did you also learn a lot about the world during those years?

OAKLEY: Yes indeed. I was very interested in geography in any case. My family used to follow the battles; I can remember sitting with my grandmother as the Allies approached Berlin. She would say, "Oh, yes, Aunt Augusta came from that little town and Uncle Wilhelm had relatives in that town!" We always had atlases and books with maps, so following WWII events was not unusual.

Q: What about reading? Do you remember any books that particularly fascinated you?

OAKLEY: We did a great deal of reading. We always had books - many from the library. In those days, we used to make weekly trips to the public library and the school library. So we always had books around, although very few belonged to the family.

I do remember some of the first few "grown-up" books I read. There was one called Van Loon's Lives by Henry Klemner. It had a red cover. It was quite thick. It was an entertaining story in which the main character was allowed to invite famous people from years gone by for dinner. They would then discuss various aspects of life, literature, and culture of their time. Van Loon would then go through the menu that he had prepared as well as some musical selections as background. The menu and the music were a bit beyond me, a mere girl of 13 or 14, but I do remember some of the biographies in those stories because they held great fascination for me. The lead character would write the name of a famous person on a slip of paper and somehow that person would appear. On one piece of paper, he wrote "The Greatest Inventor of all Times." Who showed up was a cave man; it was unclear what he had contributed - perhaps fire or the wheel or something else.

The fact is that in high school we read a great deal - such authors as Thornton Wilder. We girls also read the Nancy Drew mysteries series; the boys read Thomas Swift.

Q: How were your teachers in grade school?

OAKLEY: I had some excellent teachers as well as some real duds. This was of concern to my parents because of their interest in their children's education as well as their interest in maintaining a high standard in the local educational system in general. I can remember that my 6th grade teacher was a screwball. Mother felt that we were not receiving sufficient education in English so she home taught me on the side. Math was never too difficult for me - I guess that came from my mother who as I said was a math teacher. I had a very good high school math teacher as well as an excellent civics teacher and an average English teacher. I had a good chemistry teacher. I still remember them.

Q: Did you participate in extracurricular activities in high school?

OAKLEY: Yes indeed. I was involved in all sorts of activities. It was, as I said, a very small school - my graduating high school class consisted of 55 students. So we all knew each other well. I was involved in the debating club, in the drama club as well as sports. I also had joined the Girl Scouts and went to camp in the summer - the typical "all-American girl" of the 1940s.

Q: Was there a lot of emphasis on the old shibboleth that "a woman's place was in the home?"

OAKLEY: The prevalent atmosphere certainly did emphasize that women were to marry, have children, and become home-makers. On the other hand, I was always a very good student; I was at the top of my class in all subjects. I had lots of ambition and capabilities which were encouraged. My father and mother wanted me to learn short-hand; I said I would learn typing because that would be useful in whatever future I might have, but I would not take short-hand. I was not going to be a secretary! I can remember some of the early conversations with my parents when they tried to suggest that I could become an executive secretary if I learned short-hand. They insisted that an executive secretary had a lot of power in an organization; my response was always that I wanted to be the executive - not the secretary. There was never any doubt in my mind that I wanted to break out of the accepted mold. Instinctively, I think I had considerable support from my mother and my father - particularly the latter. He got a kick out of so many of my efforts and accomplishments. I think they realized that I had potential to go beyond the "secretarial level" and therefore they decided to encourage me.

Q: Did you have any role models?

OAKLEY: Unfortunately, I don't think I had any. There were lots of men involved in public affairs. I don't think that I ever had any doubt that I could participate in that life as well. People in Nebraska admired Eleanor Roosevelt, even if they disagreed with her. My mother had been a Phi Beta Kappa, had taught mathematics and so in some respects had broken out of the mold. She did not believe that there were any mental limitations on women.

Q: You graduated from high school in 1952. What happened next?

OAKLEY: My parents said that I could go to any university in the U.S. I wished to - except Vassar. In the late 1930s my father had gone to a football game at the University of Pittsburgh when it had a good football team. He had been sitting in the stands, having a wonderful time, cheering madly. He sat next to a woman who didn't do anything. My father with his engaging personality turned to the woman and said, "Why aren't you cheering?" She replied, "I am from Vassar and I am beyond that!" That was just too much for my father; he never forgot and told me that I could go anywhere but Vassar. He later told me he realized immediately after saying that I couldn't go to Vassar that I would probably put that college at the top of my list! I debated whether to attend an all-girls school in the East or a large diversified university elsewhere. I finally decided that I wanted to attend a large coed school in the Midwest. I chose that because I had been in a small high school; I really wanted to test my wings in a larger school. I was also wild about boys and I thought I would be happier in a coed school. I chose not to leave the general Midwest area since that was all I knew, and I thought I would be more comfortable staying in a part of the country I knew.

I applied to Northwestern only and was accepted. I have sometimes wondered whether I would not have had a better education, in the broadest sense, had I gone to a school such as Radcliff or Smith or Stanford. I think now it would not have been right for me at the time. I must add that I got a wonderful education at Northwestern; I got a lot out of the school and in retrospect I think it was a very fortuitous choice.

At Northwestern, I plunged into all the typical coed activities. I knew I wanted to major in political science and never changed, and therefore was in the College of Arts and Sciences. I had a glorious four years - was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and was very active in student politics. In those days, a woman could not be elected president of the student council; that was a male bastion. But I did become the vice-president. I belonged to a number of honorary clubs and was very active in many campus activities. I joined a sorority; at one point I was even "pinned" to a football player. I had a wide circle of acquaintances. Many of the professors were "top-notch," and I took a lot of history courses. One of my favorites was "American Diplomatic History" taught by Richard Leopold who, together with Arthur Link, were pivotal members of the history faculty. Link later went to Princeton to work on a biography of Woodrow Wilson. Leopold took a liking to me; I was wild about him and he was extremely helpful. He has been an advisor to some of the committees on which I currently sit at Northwestern. He is still alive and we still correspond. At some point in the last four years, I was very flattered to be asked to make some remarks about Professor Leopold and foreign policy at a dinner honoring him. In his classes, Leopold used to quote Dr. Dooley - a hypothetical character at the time of the Spanish American War. It was great fun to search for some of those quotations and use them.

Q: Did the Cold War and/or the communist internal threat (McCarthy) intrude at all in your classes?

OAKLEY: It did because of the courses I was taking. I had an introductory course in my freshman year that was a combination of economics, politics, and political science and philosophy. The teacher, who was a terrific fellow, told us to tell our parents that we were not being taught communism; he was teaching about communism. As you said, this was the McCarthy period - or its immediate aftermath. That was very troubling to us and people on campus were very aware of the situation. In my family, everyone felt that McCarthy was a disaster and a demagogue, but there was some apprehension that he might have found some kernels of truth. My family was not fond of Harry Truman. I think that he did not have a very good reputation in Missouri in those days. My family felt that he was a mere "machine" politician; he was not very well educated and did not have the background necessary to be president. History proved them wrong, but at the time I think my family's views were typical of many people in Missouri.

Hans Morgenthau came to Northwestern as a visiting professor in the spring of my sophomore year. Everyone was very excited about taking his course and it had a profound impact on me, because what he was preaching was "national interest." He thought that Soviet expansionism was the real threat, not communism in general. I think undoubtedly the fear of communism and socialism did increase in the U.S. in the 1950s. So the issue was very much on our minds. We were well aware of the "Iron Curtain" and of the competition between the two major blocks - the capitalist West and the communist East. I must say that it was only when I got to Fletcher, with the invasion of Hungary, for example, that I really began to focus on East-West tensions.

Q: Did you, either on campus or home, notice any residue of isolationism?

OAKLEY: I think there was some revival of that view in the late 1940s as promulgated by The Chicago Tribune and others as the U.S. began to enter into the Cold War. There certainly was some isolationist sentiment, but it was not prevalent enough to challenge the view that for our basic national interests we had to compete with the Soviets. I certainly did not feel that isolationism was a major factor. Frankly, the professors that taught the courses I took strongly supported U.S. involvement in world affairs and the assumption of world leadership by the U.S.

Q: Did you have any noticeable radicalism on campus?

OAKLEY: If there was blatant racism, I was not aware of it. What we had at Northwestern was the beginning of the hippie and Bohemian movements. We had a theater and speech school that attracted many who came to learn how to "emote." I am happy to say that Warren Beatty waited on tables at a near-by sorority house. He was a theater major; he was an attractive fellow, but not the heart-stopper that he later became. There were many others like that who attended the theater school and tended to congregate together drinking coffee all day while discussing the "higher things of life." They were not very interested in campus politics and other prosaic concerns.

I do remember the campus reaction to Brown vs. the Board of Education - the 1954 Supreme Court decision abolishing segregation in public schools. We were all fully supportive of that decision. I would describe myself as being more than moderately progressive; I had been that from the beginning since I would describe my family in the same terms. I certainly never felt any pressure to challenge that court finding and in fact all my friends applauded it.

Q: What was the racial composition of Northwestern when you were there?

OAKLEY: There were a few black girls in our freshman dorm. It was just the beginning of efforts to bring black students to Northwestern. They roomed together and we all thought we were liberal! In spite of Chicago's large black community, their attendance at Northwestern was not in the numbers one might have expected. We did have a number of black athletes, but very few black girls that I knew. That was also true for Asians; there were not many of them at the university. There were not many Hispanics. Because of the proximity to Chicago, Northwestern had a larger contingent of Jewish students. I had never really known many, but several Jewish students became my very dearest friends and are still so today.

I was an appointed member of the Committee on Undergraduate Life, basically a faculty/ administration committee on undergraduates. We faced the issue of whether a student's application for admittance to a sorority or fraternity should include a question on religious affiliation. The inclusion of such information would of course allow the sorority or fraternity to practice discrimination if it wished. The other side of the argument was that if the information were not included, those fraternities or sororities which admitted only Jewish students would not be able to spot their prospective members. This was a burning question. Today, of course, there is no argument; the information is not available and no one really cares. I think there are still some Jewish fraternities and sororities today, but Jewish students are admitted to other fraternities and sororities. Many today don't even want to bother with that sort of thing and many prefer residential colleges to the "Greek system."

I also took a lot of modern European history, economics, mathematics, geography and French. I was never particularly interested in the sciences. All in all, I had a wonderful four years. During the summers, several times I was employed as a camp counselor. After my junior year, four of my counselor colleagues and I organized a trip to Europe. That would have been in the summer of 1955. We did it through the Scandinavian Student Travel Service; we sailed on a converted troop transport that took twelve days to get to Europe. Then we traveled all over the Continent for two months for less than $1,500. It was terrific. After that introduction, I certainly felt a greater interest in international relations and that my potential choice of a career in the Foreign Service was the right one.

In my senior year, I had to face what I would do the following year and I applied for fellowships and scholarships in the fall. I had very good grades (all As my Junior year) and election to Phi Beta Kappa, plus honors in Political Science and Cum Laude. Unlike students today, I felt I shouldn't bother my professors with the burdens of recommendations; there was a much greater distance between students and professors in the 1950s than there is today. What I didn't know until later was that my professors were looking out for me and my advisor, when I finally did go to him, was very helpful; he led me to the Fletcher School which he thought would be a perfect fit. He also found a fellowship for which I was eligible and proceeded to recommend me for it. It all worked out well.

In November 1955, I turned twenty-one, which was the minimum age to take the Foreign Service exam and it was to be given in Chicago in early December. I remember meeting my father in Chicago earlier in the fall where he was attending a big sales meeting; we were walking down a street on the way to dinner when I said to him that I wasn't sure whether I should take the Foreign Service exam. I didn't think I could pass it and in any case, I wanted to go to the Fletcher School for at least a year so that even if I passed, I could not go on to the Foreign Service right away. He asked whether it would be a strike against me if I didn't pass and make it more difficult later on. I said that it would not and that an applicant could take the exam as often as he or she wanted. So he suggested that I go ahead and take the exam, just for the experience if nothing else.

So I did take the exam in early December, in downtown Chicago in a gigantic room in a federal building. The room was absolutely filled with applicants with only a few women in the crowd. We all sat down and given the number of applicants and my circumstances, I did not feel much pressure. I was used to taking tests and I approached this one as just another exam. Lo and behold, I passed! When I took the oral part of the exam in the spring of 1956, I passed that as well. But as I said, by this time I had been accepted at Fletcher and had a very nice fellowship.

The chairman of the oral panel was Herbert Fales. (I was asked in later life if I had not been intimidated to appear before a board of examiners headed by a man named "fails.") People had told me that the best way to prepare for the orals was to read the Sunday edition of The New York Times. I did that. The discussion at one stage focused on statistics - the GNP of various countries, populations, that sort of thing. I was asked whether I knew the GNP of the U.S. and I gave them a figure that was not even close. In trying to cover my mistake, I told the panel that one is always told to say the first thing that comes to mind because generally first thoughts are correct. I then told the panel that that theory just had been proven wrong! Everybody laughed and we went on to the next subject. I enjoyed the session.

Afterwards, when I was informed that I had passed, Mr. Fales gave me a note saying that his niece was going to attend Fletcher at the same time I would be there. He thought I would enjoy meeting her and attached his card as an introduction. Of course, I met her right away. She became a dear friend. Her name was Priscilla Mitchell Boughton; she joined AID after graduating from Fletcher. Her sister is Alice Rivlin, the well known economist. Priscilla died a few years ago, but we had a great friendship that started with that oral examination.

Q: Did you get a lot of comments that you, as an attractive woman, would undoubtedly be married soon and a mother thereafter and would then spend the rest of your life as a homemaker?

OAKLEY: Of course. There was always that undercurrent and a knowing smile would often by followed by the phrase "two for the price of one." I began to hate that expression. It was insulting. I didn't hear that expression as much at Fletcher as I did when I came to Washington at the end of August, 1957, during my A-100 class at the Department.

Q: Tell us a little about the student body at Fletcher?

OAKLEY: There had been, of course, a few foreign students at Northwestern. One of the organizations I belonged to was devoted to making sure that all of these students were able to spend some time every week at a sorority or fraternity house. I became acquainted with a German girl and took her home during a Thanksgiving holiday. I don't know whatever happened to her, but we did our best at Northwestern to try to integrate these foreign students into American life.

At Fletcher, it was a different story. About half of the student body was from abroad. We had a large contingent from Pakistan, and students from Germany, Japan, India, and so forth. I have maintained contacts with a large number of these people. Many of them, of course, have risen in the ranks of their governments and societies. One for example became the Thai ambassador to the U.S.; one became the UN coordinator in Bosnia and Cambodia; many of the Pakistanis ended up in their diplomatic service. For me, these have been wonderful associations. At Fletcher, we were very close; it was such a small student body. To be sure, we did have heated debates about such events as the Suez invasion or the Soviet invasion of Hungary in the fall of 1956; we lived and breathed foreign policy. At Fletcher, there were no extracurricular activities; all we did was go to class and study and debate with friends, with some bridge mixed in.

Q: How did the Hungarian issue play out?

OAKLEY: There was clearly a view that the Soviets were the aggressors holding back democratic aspirations of the Hungarian people by force, but there was no demand among the students that the U.S. or NATO take action to drive the Soviets out. That possibility was beyond conception at that time. The Hungarian revolution solidified opposition to the Soviet Union. Many countries which might have had been critical of Soviet policy were quite muted in their comments and it was a very difficult issue. I also remember debates with students from the Third World who resented the U.S. for "throwing its weight around" particularly when it came to the use of assistance funds. There was considerable sentiment for just giving our money to a country that would spend it in ways its government considered best for it. There were also students who did not care for their governments; they wondered why we supported those governments with assistance at all; their preferred process was to just send money directly to the populations who would use it for their own benefit. It was a classic debate, repeated throughout the Cold War.

Q: Was this issue addressed in your classes at all?

OAKLEY: Our classes were much too theoretical to tackle such specific issues. Also, I attended Fletcher for only one year - at the time, that was all that was needed for a Master's Degree. I have looked at course catalogues of comparable graduate schools today and notice that most institutions have moved away from just basic requirements. For the one year program then, a student had to take one course each in economics, international law, diplomatic history (which as I have mentioned I had taken at Northwestern, but then was required to participate in an advanced seminar at Fletcher), and some course on development. But all of the courses were very theoretical. I think study in those days was geared much more to a core curriculum that a student had to take. Today, courses are given on a variety of development issues - and on specific issues in regional relations, such as Sino/U.S. relations, and human rights. A student today has a wide variety of choices, but on the other hand, that student may not have a general framework in which the specific issue might fit.

Q: Did you get involved in any discussions about Israel and Palestine?

OAKLEY: There was not much focus on that issue as I remember it. This was 1956/1957, very early in the development of the Arab-Israeli issue. Israel was struggling; it was not the powerhouse that it became. Suez was the closest we came to the issue and that was more about colonialism than it was about Israel and its Arab neighbors. The U.S. stance on the British and French invasion of Suez gave us a real boost in the Third World.

Q: You mentioned the presence of Pakistani students. Were there other foreign students who brought their political struggles to Fletcher?

OAKLEY: Not really. We all got along reasonably well. The partition of India, I have always felt, did not have a great impact on the United States. Most Americans have no knowledge of what happened. In 1947, we were recovering from WWII and viewed India as a British problem - that attitude changed later. I think the Cold War was really the dominant international issue in the 1950s. Then came the issues of socialism and planned economies followed by questions of development - and what was the best approach to development.

Q: How about independence for African colonies?

OAKLEY: We were all very supportive of independence movements. There was a student from Ghana who was very excited about the move toward independence. If I remember correctly, in the spring of 1956 Great Britain granted Ghana a new constitution that eventually led to full-fledged independence in 1957. I think there was a general feeling at Fletcher that independence would come to all of the African colonies, the sooner the better, and this would lead to accelerated economic development. Looking back, I would say we were rather naï¿½ve.

Q: Was the issue of Fabian socialism as practiced in the Third World discussed particularly since it seemed to be such a disaster?

OAKLEY: I think in 1957 we were just beginning to approach this issue. It was a time in which most of the post-war governments in Europe had a socialist bent. There was a great emphasis on central planning and direction. It was assumed that most of the African countries would follow that pattern. India was a perfect illustration; its approach to development reached its peak of fame in the early 1960s when John Kenneth Galbraith became U.S. Ambassador to India. In retrospect, I don't remember the socialist approach to development being challenged by most American students, many of whom came out of a liberal background. No one suggested that planned economies would not work and that the road to development required free markets.

Q: There also seems to have been, and may continue to be, an affinity in the academic world for planned economies. They are a lot easier to study and develop theories from them! Capitalism is sort of chaotic and does not lend itself to linear explanations. There did seem to be a leftish bent on campuses.

OAKLEY: Charles Kindleberger of MIT was a visiting professor at Fletcher during the year I was there. Even though I didn't take a course from him, I heard him speak several times as he was a wonderful speaker. He was one of the best known academics who thought that economies could be planned and thereby influence and speed up development in various countries. That was a perfectly acceptable notion in academic circles in the late 1950s. No one seemed to raise any objections to this theory. It was only later that the debate really cam into play.

Q: What impact did the Eisenhower administration have? (By this time, it was half-way through its eight years).

OAKLEY: I remember casting my first presidential vote, an absentee ballot in the fall of 1956. Most of my friends, as was I, were strongly influenced by their families, admired Adlai Stevenson, but preferred Ike.

Q: When you graduated from Fletcher, how did you view your future in the Foreign Service?

OAKLEY: I have addressed classes at Fletcher on this subject many years after I began in the Foreign Service. I have said that the vast majority of my classmates expected to go into the public sector in some way. Most of the Americans were thinking about careers in the Foreign Service although some thought they would try it for three or four years and then see. Many of the foreign students were expecting to enter their foreign offices and their foreign services; a few of my colleagues were looking to work in the international economic sphere, at Treasury or the Commerce Department. There were a number of students who were considering careers in academia. Some stayed at Fletcher to acquire their Ph.D.s, which would allow them to pursue teaching positions in universities or colleges. Most of my male classmates had been in military service; military service gave them an interest in foreign affairs and they pursued that interest by going to Fletcher.

A few of my male classmates did have to go into the military after graduating from Fletcher. Some went on to law school. One or two went into private business, but they were exceptions. More eventually joined the private sector after experience in the public sector. Today, in looking where the graduates of the class of 1957 are, you would get a much broader spectrum of employment than you saw in 1958. I think that we all felt that we had some sort of mission or obligation to enter public service. It was what interested us. We were not materialistic; no one talked about becoming rich. People just didn't show overt interest in the acquisition of material wealth. We were not ostentatious about cars or clothes or trips. The times, and certainly Fletcher, was much more equalitarian than today. Today, many if not most of the graduates from Fletcher or Georgetown are heading for international business, either as employees of large manufacturing corporations or consulting groups like Arthur Anderson or Deloitte and Touche or investment banks and institutions specializing in international finance. Some are going into journalism, which I think is slightly more popular than it was in my days at Fletcher. None of my classmates went into journalism.

Q: Any interest in becoming a Congressional staffer?

OAKLEY: None that I can remember. There were several people from Fletcher who after their Ph.D.s did become Congressional fellows for a year. They would come to Washington and spend a year learning how Congress operated; some would spend six months in the House and six months in the Senate. Seth Tillman was one of those; he stayed after the end of his fellowship and eventually became chief speech-writer for Senator Fulbright. Now he teaches at Georgetown. But the internship route was not nearly as popular in the 1950s as it is today.

Q: Did you join the Foreign Service right after graduating from Fletcher?

OAKLEY: Upon graduation, I informed the Department that I was ready to enter on duty. I was told by the Bureau of Personnel that they were very sorry but that in that year the Department had already exceeded its quota for new officers and didn't know when it could make me an offer. Deflation! So I went home from Boston and found that period during which I had no idea what would happen to be very difficult. I didn't know whether I would be offered a job by the Department in six months or in a year or more. I didn't know what to do. I remember that while taking a trip with my parents to visit my brother and his family, I decided that upon returning home, if I had not heard from the Department, I was just going to go out and get a job, almost any job. I just had to do something; I just couldn't sit around just waiting. On my return home on a Sunday night, I found a letter from the Department asking me to report to Washington, DC on August 29, 1957. What a relief!

While waiting for that magic date, I took a trip to Mexico for the first time with Priscilla Mitchell and her mother. We had a wonderful time and I returned home for a few days before moving to Washington. I should add that my father did not approve of this trip as I was so close to starting work in Washington and had no money of my own. We worked it out that I would barrow the money, with interest, which was fine with me. For Christmas that year he had a card printed up saying "No Interest" in old English script - it gave us all much amusement over the years!

Q: Late summer is a great time to come to Washington!

OAKLEY: At the end of August I thought Washington rather a sleepy little town. I had a friend from Fletcher who had gone to work for the CIA earlier in the summer and had arranged with her to share an apartment when I arrived. She was waiting for me in some dreadful women's hotel. We immediately rented an efficiency apartment with twin beds in the Sherry Towers across from the Department; it was a move of desperation just to get out of that hotel. Between the two of us, she, who had graduated from Tufts and Fletcher, and I, from Northwestern and Fletcher, we had a relatively large number of acquaintances in Washington with a great deal of coming-in-and going-out of town - particularly young military officers. Our hearts were young and gay. It was just wonderful. Nothing complicated, but a steady stream of friends. We had very simple dinner parties in the apartment and we had a great time.

We then moved to a larger place in the Sherry Towers when Priscilla Mitchell came to join us later in the fall. We didn't have our own cars so we had to find boyfriends who would transport us around for shopping on Saturdays and who would help us move. I was going through the A-100 course, where there were about thirty of us, Foreign Service entrants. I was the only woman. But they did add some other women later who had been working in the Department while waiting to be assigned to the A-100 course. This meant that the composition of the group was somewhat fluid.

Another A-100 course that had started in July included a couple of other Fletcher classmates. And thus, in September, I was introduced to Bob Oakley, although we did not start dating until late October. I was involved at the time to a fellow in Boston, complicating the situation as you can well imagine, but I broke off with him. There were lots of informal parties, and friends in and out of our apartment. It was great fun!

I must add that I had a wonderful group in my A-100 class. It included Bill Luers, David Korn, Peter Bridges, and Jim Briggs - all people who remained wonderful Foreign Service colleagues through the years.

Q: Did you pick up any tidbits that gave you any clues as to what you might want to do or what you did not wish to do?

OAKLEY: I think we all recognized at that point that we would have little choice in first assignments. We didn't know what they would be and no one had any great expectations. Even in those days, many officers spent their first tours in visa sections in far off posts. There was no feeling that one could influence that first assignment. There was just a higher authority that told you where to go and off you went like a good soldier. I had not passed my French language proficiency test yet, so I was held back from getting my first assignment until I had completed French language training.

Bob did not have an assignment either when he finished the A-100 course and some French training just before Christmas. He was sent to study more French in Nice, which at that time was the site of FSI's overseas French programs. Some heiress, maybe Barbara Hutton, had donated a building. Later Congress closed it down - they felt it was unseemly for the USG to have a program in a villa in Nice! And right after that, in May of 1958, he was sent to Khartoum as the General Services officer (where they spoke Arabic and English). By this time, we had decided to get married and it was a very complicated situation. I knew that I had to resign. I must say that at the time my consciousness was very low. Women in the Foreign Service knew that if they married they would have to resign and we accepted that discrimination without batting an eye lash. At the time, there weren't many vacancies for junior officers; if the Department had offered me something potentially interesting and challenging, I might have felt differently about resignation. My decision to get married was undoubtedly greeted by personnel with relief because it was just one less person whom it had to place. I was told that the Department could not pay my way to the Sudan to get married, but that it might be able to arrange a marriage by proxy. Dwight Dickinson was the person in personnel trying to be helpful and take care of my problems. I told him that I did not want to get married by proxy; I didn't think that it really was the way to start a marriage. A number of people found my situation quite amusing and used to laugh at my wedding plans; it confirmed their prejudices about the Foreign Service accepting women.

Q: It was pure discrimination, and the Department even today still had troubles employing both husband and wife.

OAKLEY: That is true, but the 1950s were totally different from today. In those days, when women married, they generally did not work. I never asked to see the regulations about married women; I did not object nor demand a job when I got to Khartoum. I just accepted life as it was generally lived. In fact, the Department operated by custom, and not because of legal limitations, but no woman thought of challenging those customs - our consciousness was very low indeed.

Q: I read somewhere that until 1974, a middle grade male officer could support a wife and a family. But that from that time on, a family needed two incomes. So economics apparently had some impact in changing customs.

OAKLEY: I am sure that played a role. As I said, in 1957-58, it never occurred to me to challenge the Department on its personnel policies. I was deeply in love, ready for marriage. I did not see myself as a victim in marrying Bob; it was the beginning of a new phase in my life. I had had a feeling on a number of occasions in college and at Fletcher, as I was taking one more test or filling out one more application, that it might have been easier and time to give up and just get married. That is what many women did. They didn't see any use in pushing and fighting for certain positions when the outcome was quite evident when one got married. I knew how they felt as I had had similar feelings at moments of discouragement. But when I decided to marry Bob, I didn't feel that I was doing it because other professional avenues were just too hard; I looked forward to being a partner in a shared life in the Foreign Service.

Q: There was some validity to that view since when one married in those days, one married into the Foreign Service. It was not just getting married and living in some small American town. Both husband and wife were going to be challenged when he was assigned overseas in the Foreign Service. It was a different era. Let's talk a little about the role of a wife in the Foreign Service. First what happened to you when you decided to get married?

OAKLEY: As I said, Bob was sent immediately from Nice to Khartoum about April. I had found out first what was going to happen to him through a phone call from a friend in the Foreign Service who had a contact in Personnel. I called Bob immediately, not easy then, before he got his official orders and was told to be in Khartoum in three days. It became very complicated to get home for a wedding from the middle of Africa in June, 1958. Even with jet planes, it took two or three days to get back to the States and Bob didn't have much leave. The embassy was in desperate need for all hands because it was expanding with a new assistance program and he was reluctant to tell his boss, after just arriving, that he wanted to go back to the U.S. to get married with two weeks off. On the other hand, if he had returned, we would have had to have a big wedding that neither of us really wanted. We considered meeting in New York and being married with the immediate family present. Both families had become acquainted and friendly through an exchange of visits and everyone was very involved in all the planning - and it seemed to become more complicated daily. (Our minister, at a large party my parents gave just before I left, said not to worry about the legality of the wedding - he would take care of that later!) In the end, it all seemed too much and simply easier if I flew to Cairo alone to marry Bob. Bob was to come up to Cairo a little earlier to make the arrangements - and for our honeymoon which we hoped to take in Beirut. Unfortunately, the Marines landed in Lebanon about this time but Cairo offered excitement enough for a honeymoon..

There was still considerable anti-American feeling in Egypt in 1958. Some people doubted that we could ever get married there. I ignored the skeptics and told Bob that the thing I really wanted was that he meet me at the Cairo airport and it would all work out. (Bob laughed when he heard that my father had bought just a one way ticket to Cairo!) When I landed on the tarmac at the Cairo airport, in the middle of the night, I could not find Bob. Finally, a stewardess came up with a message that he was on his way to pick me up. What had happened was that Bob had had to get a yellow fever shot to get into Egypt from the Sudan; when he arrived in Cairo, the Egyptian officials objected to the where it was listed on his health card. It was just a tweak at an American official! They put him in quarantine at the airport. The Egyptian officials finally allowed him to make one call to an American consul. He was obviously a jerk because his comment was that there wasn't anything he could do and hung up. Finally Bob managed to convince the authorities to allow him to make another phone call and he reached an A-100 class friend at the embassy who had been very helpful in trying to arrange our wedding. He came out to the airport and paid off an official to stamp the health document that allowed Bob to leave quarantine. That should have been done in the beginning!

So Bob got out of quarantine just a couple of ours before I was to land. He went back to Cairo to change clothes - he was covered with bed bug bites by this time - but that made him late for his return to the airport. Finally he and our friends arrived just as I was getting to the waiting area - and was I glad to see them!

I went to the New Shepheard's Hotel (the old Shepheard's having burned down) and Bob stayed with our friends. The embassy finally gave us a Foreign Service local to help us through the Egyptian formalities and what we went through was unbelievable. Of course, I had been on a plane for 36 hours to get to Cairo and was not in very good shape - all I wanted to do was sleep. We went from one office to another; it was obvious that one could not get married on a Saturday in Egypt as we hoped and we were told that it might take at least another week. All we did was collect one official stamp after another.

Finally, thanks to the local employee, we had all the necessary papers. So on Sunday morning, June 8, we went to the Cairo registrar's office for the civil ceremony. The office was piled high with dusty old files and papers up to the top of the 16 feet high ceiling, with a lazy ceiling fan moving slowly around. We had our embassy friends along as witnesses. When the last papers in both Arabic and English were completed, the clerk turned to Bob and said, "Alright, now where is the dowry? How many camels and goats were agreed upon?" I had to tell the clerk that my father didn't have any camels or goats. He looked at Bob as if he had lost all of his marbles - marrying a woman without getting camels and goats - what benefits could he possibly get from this marriage! In any case, that took care of the civil side of the marriage formalities.

In the afternoon, we went to the Anglican cathedral. All the British clergy had had to leave the country after the Suez invasion, so an Egyptian archdeacon and his assistant presided. Our two friends, Jim and Betty Sartorious, were our attendants and gave me away, and there was an organist and her husband. You can't get much smaller than that but we had a proper service, followed by a small reception hosted by Jim and Betty in their apartment for a few from the embassy. That was our wedding and to this day we don't know if it was all proper and legal. But who knows? Our marriage certificate is in Arabic, with an attestation and translation stamped by the embassy. In any case no one has ever asked to see it.

Q: We do have Bob's oral history, but just for this record, give us a little background on him.

OAKLEY: Bob Oakley's family was originally from Dallas, Texas where he was born. His parents moved to Shreveport in the mid-1930s and Bob grew up there. His father had been in WWI and had a lot of health problems. His mother and father later divorced. She was very concerned about Bob's education, especially with the public schools in Shreveport, and he was sent off to a small boarding school - South Kent, in Connecticut, beginning in 10th grade.

Q: I know it well since I went to Kent.

OAKLEY: Bob experienced "simplicity of life and directness of purpose" in that old New England atmosphere and it stuck. It was just right for him and he got a good education. He was very bright and I think a hard working student. Bob went from South Kent to Princeton; he graduated with the great class of 1952. He then went to the Naval Officers' Candidate School at Newport and served in naval intelligence for three years in Japan. He did some graduate work at Tulane University in New Orleans before the Foreign Service.

Q: Khartoum was his first post?

OAKLEY: Right.

Q: Fine. Let's go back to your adventures. It doesn't sound like the embassy was very helpful.

OAKLEY: I thought the same thing. Looking back on this episode, it really was a pathetic performance on the part of the Cairo embassy. For the consul to say that he couldn't help us, I think, was not acceptable. During this ordeal, we cabled our parents and Bob's mother finally suggested that we go see the ambassador, which would have been a good idea at the start. In the end, it all worked out. We had a wonderful honeymoon in Cairo. I got terribly sick because the hotel's air-conditioning didn't work well at all and I froze or baked. Finally, the hotel had to get an Egyptian doctor to treat my strep throat.

At last, the newly married couple went to the airport, again in the middle night, to get our flight to Khartoum. Of course, we didn't know whether the plane would take off as scheduled; it did finally and we landed safely at dawn in KhartouBob went right off to work, leaving me in our house to fend for myself, and to sleep. It all seemed a bleak, godforsaken place at first glance, I must say.

Q: Tell us a little about life in Khartoum in the mid-1950s.

OAKLEY: We were immediately put in a furnished house and given a "welcome" kit of dishes and linens, as none of the things I had shipped by airfreight had arrived. We also had a cook in place. A Fletcher classmate was already at post, working for the CIA and he was helpful and welcominBob, of course, had been there for a few weeks and therefore knew his way around slightly. The ambassador, James Moose, gave us a reception. He was quite a character, an old Foreign Service hand and a very good Arabist. Mrs. Moose was a lady of the old school, charming as she swooshed her handkerchief around, entertaining beautifully. She used a "zone defense" for her garden and cocktail parties.

Our shipments, as I said, had not arrived. We had almost no dishes. Bob finally said, "Go out and buy some. I want to have young Sudanese to the house and to get to know them." Our colleagues in the embassy were very helpful for the most part. In fact, we had a wonderful Foreign Service community in Khartoum. It took us under its wing and helped us to settle in and made life considerably easier and fun. I remember Fran and Margaret Dickman, Cleo and Lucille Noel, Bob and Nancy Gordon; they all became our Foreign Service family. For the first six months, we did not have a car; we had ordered it but it took that long to reach post. I started to ride all over town on a bicycle that the cook and I shared. I was told that it was a good way to see the Khartoum and it was. We would rent cars occasionally since embassy cars were not available to us, but we did not go very far in those first few months.

Our first house had been occupied previously by someone from the "station," or the Agency, or CIA. When we moved in everyone thought Bob was his replacement, including British intelligence, who watched us carefully. In fact, I think during our whole tour in the Sudan, many thought that we were CIA agents. It was not credible to many that a Princeton and naval intelligence graduate would be assigned to fixing toilets and other household problems - for which Bob was responsible as GSO. Many thought that this was a very thin cover for a CIA man. Even Mrs. Moose asked me once whether Bob was working for the CIA. So we were under great suspicion. But I think this misimpression became a plus, as we met a lot of people whom we would normally not have seen unless Bob were an undercover agent!

We did meet a wonderful group of young Sudanese. Most of them had just returned from Cambridge or Oxford after attending Victoria College in Alexandria - a prep school. They were back to help with Sudan's newly achieved independence in 1956; they were much less "fundamentalist" than they and the rest of the country became later. They had young wives, with whom I became well acquainted. Starting out to entertain, we had many misadventures. Once we had a hilarious dinner party where the main course was duck that Bob had shot along the river. Our cook kept shaking his head with reservations about this game, but Bob, the great hunter, assured all that it was safe. He had hung the birds to cure and age. The ducks, of course, ate fish for food and that made the flesh absolutely awful. Of course, I had no idea how to cook a duck; the "Joy of Cooking" was only of limited help. We served the duck but the whole plate was inedible, even vegetables beside the duck. It was awful. So we had our share of adventures in Khartoum.

We had a good time. I did not have enough to do during the day. I finally took a teaching job at a local girls' school in North Khartoum, run by missionaries. I studied some Arabic, but the tutor was not very good. I regret deeply that I did not apply myself more and get a really good tutor so that I could have made real progress with the language. In those days, it was still the practice in the diplomatic community for newly arrived wives to call on those who had been at post for sometime. Several of us newcomers would go around and call on the British and the French and the Germans, etc., wearing hats and gloves even in the heat of Khartoum. The British had garden parties; we played bridge. Men had to wear "Red Sea Rig" which was a tuxedo without a jacket. The ladies wore English flower print dresses or frocks. I couldn't tell the difference between the flowered dresses worn during the day and those worn at night, but I was told that there was.

It seemed that we were quite busy socially, primarily because of the young Sudanese we met. We ended up teaching them "Monopoly" which we would play outside in the garden in the evenings, with floor lamps on long extension cords. One of the participants of these soirees was a young man, Monsour Khalid, who later became Sudan's foreign minister. He later became an opposition leader and remains a good friend. We had in our group a young lady from the el Mahdi family, Sarah, who became the first Sudanese girl to go to study in the U.S., sponsored by some leaders from the League of Women Voters. She actually spent a summer with Warren Buffet and his family in Omaha - this was about 1960. We saw Sarah and the Buffets when we went to Omaha that summer on home leave and Warren and I have talked about her over the years. So somehow or other, a lot of lasting connections were built.

Bob's mother and grandmother came out for a visit, a remarkable trip. His grandmother was then about 80 years old. She and Mrs. Moose, the ambassador's wife, became immediate dearest friends. In those days, when there were visitors like that, there was a party every night. So we had a good time in Khartoum. We traveled a bit; we visited Addis Ababa by air one time. We went out to see the "Fuzzy Wuzzy" tribe of Kipling fame near Port Sudan on another road trip.

I must tell one more story. Mrs. Moose had returned to the States to be with her children for Christmas. The ambassador did not go. But he asked Bob to accompany him on a road trip north, across the desert to Wadi Halfa, over the holiday. He didn't ask me; it never occurred to the ambassador that a woman could go on a trip like that. That really made me mad! Bob did not challenge the ambassador's stance or ask to include me; he felt he really was in no position to do so, but he wanted to go and away they went. When I think back on it, I don't think that would happen today. It still irritates me when I think of it.

Q: What were the sentiments that Ambassador Moose and others were expressing about the Arab world?

OAKLEY: James Moose was considered one of the preeminent Arabists in the Department of State. He had studied Arabic in the 1920s in Paris. The Mooses had had many assignments in the Arab world - in fact they may have been the only assignments they ever had. He had been our ambassador to Syria; when Syria and Egypt merged in 1958, he was out of a job and available for the Sudan assignment. He was rather aloof and withdrawn, although a very experienced officer. Mrs. Moose was wonderful. Bob's grandmother looked at her, discovered a kindred soul from Kentucky, and as I said they became very friendly; she told me that I should watch Mrs. Moose and emulate her in everything she did! She was the perfect, old school helpmate for her husband.

Q: When did Sudan become independent?

OAKLEY: The Sudan became independent in 1956. They had a British form of government; i.e. two houses of parliament and a prime minister elected by the lower chamber. It had been ruled as a condominium with Egypt, although the British really called the shots. There was a separate "Sudan Service" in the British Foreign office. As we understood it, the Sudan was considered the "crown jewel" of British colonial service. Therefore British process and style continued after independence. This first government lasted only until 1958, when a bloodless military coup took place, due to some political problems about elections and distribution of power. Then in 1969, General Nimeiri led another military coup that led the Sudan down a more Islamist path.

Since the first coup was bloodless and the only signs of it were some tanks in the street, the coup really didn't have much significance to us. As the GSO, Bob was not involved professionally.

Q: Were there any problems with the tribes in the South during your years in the Sudan?

OAKLEY: The South has always been a problem for Khartoum - two very different parts of Africa were put together to form the modern Sudan by the British Colonial Administration. After the AID mission got started, a lot of U.S. assistance was to flow to the south because it was even less developed that the north. We hoped to travel down, or up, the Nile and see some of the south but it was very difficult to get there as transportation was very limited and quite expensive, usually undertaken by charter.

The southern Sudanese were very tall, thin people; they would often stand on one leg with the other foot propped on the knee to rest. Then they would change legs. Their blue-black skin would absolutely glow. They would sing while working which was a real delight to my ears. There was without question a major division between the north and the south. The south, which was not Moslem, resented the north, and the north thought the south should be converted.

In the period 1958 to 1960, I did not have a feeling that anything was going to change. The people in Khartoum recognized a southern problem and were simply going to live with it because they foresaw no change. There was a dim hope that economic development would lead to a change in the attitude of the two parts of the country toward each other. Again, I want to reemphasize that Khartoum in this period was not very Islamic. There was a brewery and no prohibitions on liquor sales and consumption. It is true that the Sudanese were always conservative; the women wore something called the "tobe," which was a long piece of cloth that they would wrap around themselves, over dresses. But that was as much for protection against the sun and the wind and sandstorms than it was a religious statement - much like the Indian sari. The young women were curious and interested in becoming acquainted with me and I made a lot of friends among those that spoke English.

One evening I learned a great lesson. As most of us do, I thought that others would react to events and actions as I did. Very often, when Bob and I (considered almost family) would eat with these young Sudanese friends, men and women would eat together but if there were a stranger or an outsider along, then the two sexes ate separately. One evening when I was to go out and join the men for dinner after talking to a number of my young women friends, chatting about one thing and another, I asked whether they didn't want to join the men for dinner as well. They thought that it might not be proper on that particular evening because of an outsider being present. I asked whether they were not bothered by this discrimination, as I would have been. I was told that it didn't bother them at all but what they were disturbed by was the fact that they couldn't vote. This was after the military coup when no one was voting anyway! This was just the opposite of the reaction I had expected; I had thought that they would first focus on discrimination in the family and then move to the political arena. Instead, they were first of all disturbed by the political practices in the country. I though that this was a very good lesson in how we Americans may completely misunderstand other cultures.

As mentioned earlier, we had a wonderful time traveling with the chief of the "Fuzzy Wuzzies" of Kipling poem visiting his tribe, the Hadendua, who lived in eastern Sudan in desolate areas of sand and rock. They had some irrigated cotton fields near the Eritrea-Ethiopia border. At one place, we went into a hospital and watched as the medics tried to sew up a fellow who had been slashed by a sword in a tribal fight. When we left the hospital, our host began to laugh. He had been listening to what the women waiting outside the clinic had been saying. They had never seen a white person before and they assumed that we had gone into the clinic to be cured - they were praying that we would be! Very nice.

Q: What was the situation with Egypt?

OAKLEY: There was a heavy Egyptian influence on the Sudan, as there has been historically, especially in commerce and education. There were a lot of Egyptian schools and teachers in the Sudan - as well as doctors. So the two countries had a very close relationship. The Sudanese looked to Cairo as the cosmopolitan city of the region - something like an lowan looking at Chicago. There was not much discussion about Egypt/Sudan relations although I think the Sudanese were wary of the Egyptians. But as I said, in general, the relationship was intimate.

I should tell you one other story. When we were traveling in the eastern Sudan, in several places we watched the process of bringing the herds toward the water holes. The Sudanese would dip a leather bucket into a well, bring it up and spread it over the ground for the animals, mainly camels and goats, to drink. During one of our visits, one of the local herdsmen came up to our host and asked who we were. He was told that we were from the American Embassy, on a tour of the country to see what Sudanese life was like. The local looked over at us standing around and asked, "Don't they have anything better to do?" That has become one of our Oakley family mottos. I thought that was a very perceptive question, particularly from that man, who obviously had other, life sustaining things to do.

When Bob and I left the Sudan in April 1960 after two years, we were to go back to Washington where Bob was assigned to the Office of United Nations Political Affairs. It seems hard to believe today, but we took a month to get home. We left Khartoum on a train - an old fashioned English-Sudanese one with a steam engine - all the way to the border at Wadi Halfa, a town which was doomed to disappear because of the flooding from the Aswan Dam then under construction. We had some young Sudanese friends who met us there - children of some friends from the Agricultural Service. We drove around the area for a while, looking at date farming that would soon be gone. Then we boarded a river steamer that took about 24 hours just to pass the temple of Abu Simbel - we did not disembark but saw it from the river. Then on to Aswan, which was covered with construction equipment and activity.

From there we took another train to Luxor where we spent three days, visiting the Valley of the Kings and all the wonderful sites and antiquities in that region. An overnight train took us to Cairo. So it was over a week from Khartoum to Cairo - worth every minute in light of what we saw. Then we flew to Amman and visited Jerusalem, most of which was under Jordanian rule at the time. Then on to Beirut and Athens and Munich, where we picked up a car to drive through Germany, visiting a cousin in the U.S. army en route. Then on to Paris and London and Southampton, where we put the car and ourselves on the U.S. United States for New York. We were met by my parents, most anxious to see us after two years. It was a wonderful trip of a month through many of the world's great antiquities and modern Europe. In a way, it was our honeymoon trip, delayed by a couple of years. It still staggers me to think that we were allowed to take that kind of a trip for that long a period.

Q: Did our landing of Marines in Lebanon have any repercussions as far as you were concerned?

OAKLEY: No, probably because it was a bloodless landing - no fighting. It was done to preserve Lebanon as an independent country, against Nasser's desires or so we thought at the time. I think there was some resentment against the U.S. in the Arab world, but I don't think it made much of a splash in the Sudan. There certainly was heightened tension between the U.S. and Egypt, but Khartoum was a long way away from Egypt.

Q: No Soviet involvement in the Sudan at the time?

OAKLEY: Soviet embassy activity was just beginning. Sometimes, while attending garden parties, we watched Soviets trying to make contacts and extend their influence, particularly in the commercial area. At some of the large Sudanese parties, where the chairs were set in a large square or circle around the tea table in the middle of the garden, I would glance at the Soviet wives who looked like little tanks, short and squat, with their hair severely pulled back - tough little ladies. One could easily guess what they had been through. We didn't have a common language; some may have spoken some Arabic; none spoke English. Sometimes, we would sit and smile at each other. I think however that the Soviets were probably more active than I was aware.

Q: Did the coup interfere at all with your contacts with your Sudanese friends?

OAKLEY: Not really. The Sudanese coup in '58 was bloodless, as I said. No shots were fired. Perhaps people stayed at home for a few days, but it was essentially just an extra-legal, peaceful change of government and our lives were untouched by it. We were the youngest couple in the embassy, just recently married, and our friends of comparable ages were not yet involved to any great extent in the political life of the country.

Q: Was there much of an upheaval in the souk?

OAKLEY: Not really. There may have been some tensions because of the change of government, but it was not really noticeable to customers.

Q: In 1960, you returned to Washington. What happened then?

OAKLEY: As I said, Bob went to work for UN/P in IO. He was not sure what the job was when assigned, but it was an active period at the UN with many newly independent countries. We rented a small apartment just behind the Iwo Jima Monument in Arlington, and crammed it full of wedding gifts we had not seen and souvenirs from the Sudan. A week after Kennedy's inauguration in 1961, our daughter was born - after a major snowstorm. I can well remember the baby being due on the 20th - Inauguration Day - and the predicted snowstorm. First babies are notoriously late so we could wait with friends while watching the Inauguration. I think we had chains permanently on our tires to be sure to make it to the hospital.

In those heady days before the Kennedy inauguration, I will never forget how the appointees to the State Department were announced. Many, like G. Mennen Williams, were of course well known. The announcements were dramatic; President Kennedy came out to meet the press on the porch of his Georgetown house, before January 20th; he made a big deal of announcing even assistant secretary-ships. It was an amazing process. We didn't know anything about Dean Rusk although he was familiar to many others.

The pace of government activity picked up after January 20th. Bob was working on a lot of UN issues related to the Congo. I can't remember the exact chronology in that unhappy part of the world. In June 1960, Belgium had granted independence; then there was an army mutiny and the announced secession of Katanga from the rest of Congo, under Tshombe. There followed a period of serious unrest which resulted in Lumumba's assassination in early 1961. Opposition to the UN peacekeeping forces continued. So all of this kept Bob quite busy, and he loved it. He was asked to stay for a third year and readily accepted.

At that point, we moved to a rented house and had a second child, a boy. I couldn't be very active outside the house during those years in Washington, but I did join a group of women, with many from the State Department, being organized to help all the new diplomatic wives recently arrived in Washington. The group was called something like the "The Hospitality and Information Service" or THIS. All sorts of people were trying to participate in this effort, particularly young wives. I assisted when I could, although as I said, I had two young children without a lot of help. We both met a lot of interesting people through this program.

Q: Was there a palpable difference when Kennedy became president?

OAKLEY: I think there was. One small group I was part of met with the dashing Angier Biddle Duke, the Chief of Protocol. He told us what a terrific job we were doing, welcoming young diplomatic wives, mainly from Africa. We also met with James Symington who succeeded Duke. Although the group slowly disbanded, I am always amazed by the number of times that I run into members. Some of these activities were funded by the Ford Foundation, to enable neighborhood groups to get to know young diplomatic wives, particularly those from the Third World, so that they would have an interesting tour in Washington and meet Americans. It was an exciting operation, part of the New Frontier. When you remember the number of newly independent countries that sent their first diplomats to the U.S. during this period, you begin to recognize what an invaluable service this entire enterprise provided - and it has continued in various forms.

Q: How did you relate to these young diplomatic wives?

OAKLEY: Easily. After being in the Sudan it was natural for me to be active in a group focused on Africa, with many new, young diplomats assigned to Washington. Also, sometimes Bob and I hosted African students who might be on a summer tour of the U.S. They often needed a place to stay in Washington for a few days and we invited them to stay with us. We had a charming young Ugandan student who stayed with us for two or three days. There were also Sudanese friends who would stay with us, including the young Sudanese woman, Sarah el-Mahdi, about whom I spoke earlier. She was the first woman to come from the Sudan to study in the U.S. In accordance to custom, she later married a cousin who became the President of the Sudan and is still an active politician.

Q: Was she any relationship to the el-Mahdi of Spain?

OAKLEY: Yes, indeed. When we arrived in the Sudan, Sarah's grandfather was "the Mahdi." He was the posthumous son of the original Mahdi who had killed General Gordon around the turn of the century, followed by the British under General Kitchener invading, killing him, and taking over the country. B1958 the grandson was very elderly and not in good health; he died while we were there. We have maintained contact with that family ever since.

Q: Did you have any reflections on Adlai Stevenson from Bob's work on the UN?

OAKLEY: Bob certainly did. While working in UN/P, he was detailed to New York in the fall of 1962 to work on issues involving Africa and other Third World countries. It was a very busy time for those issues; there was at least one time when they had to have Bob clear out the men's room because they needed votes on a key resolution. I visited Bob in New York once just before our second child was due while my mother-in-law babysat with our daughter. I remember it well because it was during that weekend the Cuban Missile Crisis erupted and Bob never got away. So it wasn't much of a visit.

We wanted very much to go overseas again, back to Africa if at all possible. Before our daughter was born, I had audited a course at Howard University in African studies. I found it very interesting because I had had no academic background in that area. By early 1963, we knew we were going to Abidjan, Ivory Coast, in the summer with a 2 ï¿½ year old and a baby. Bob had had French at Nice, as had I at FSI. That was a main reason he was assigned as the economic officer. So we bought up all the diapers, baby food and other necessities that we thought we needed; it was the first time I had ever ordered food in such quantities through wholesale outlets. Everything came in cases, milk in powder form.

Q: Did you get any help in preparing you, with your very young children, for service in an underdeveloped country?

OAKLEY: Nothing. The post did recommend that we buy certain things, which is why we ordered all that food. We planned to buy a car from someone who was leaving post. The embassy knew that we were coming; in fact, they knew six months in advance. We got to Abidjan after a long, long Pan American flight from Washington to New York to Dakar; and finally Monrovia, which had a little country airport in the jungle. No one knew when the next flight to Abidjan might arrive, so we rented a hotel room at Roberts Field, as we were fifty miles from town. Lo and behold, the plane did land almost on time. We got on and arrived in Abidjan - I remember stepping out of the airplane and thinking that I had just been hit by a wet, hot washcloth. We were taken to our apartment, which was a fourth floor walk-up with an open, empty elevator shaft. That was just great for a 2 ï¿½ year old! It was a very difficult, dangerous setting with these two very young children - going up and down the steps. I knew I needed a nanny who would basically live with us and help me lug groceries and take care of the children, and I knew I also needed a houseboy to help with the cleaning, the laundry, and serving when we had guests as well as a cook.

But I found that in Abidjan, the French did not have the same "nanny system" that I had known in the Sudan and other places. Housing was not built so that servants could live with their employers - certainly different from the Sudan where very adequate quarters were available for a household staff. In the Ivory Coast, the servants would come in the morning and leave in the afternoon. People ate their large meal at noon and "rested the rest of the day." Of course, diplomatic life does not adhere to such a schedule. Finally, we worked out a system. I got a Nigerian "nanny" who spoke English with the children; she also understood that she was needed all day. Then we found houseboys who would stay with the children after they went to bed and while we were attending evening functions. We also had a guard who sat at the gate with his bows and arrows. He was from Upper Volta; unfortunately he didn't speak any French. That didn't help and in general the total setup was difficult to manage, primarily because we didn't have a "nanny" for the 24 hours per day we needed one.

Q: This is a good illustration of the challenges that wives and families face overseas. The husband has his work; the wife is often inexperienced, but has to deal with the practical realities of day-to-day living. What was it like to deal in the foreign culture of the Ivory Coast?

OAKLEY: It was extremely difficult. Bob went off every morning to the embassy, leaving me to cope with the household and with two little children. The market was downtown, but I didn't know how to get there. We had a car and I slowly learned my way around. It took a long time for my necessary support system to be put in place. We had a washing machine in the kitchen, but nowhere to dry a diaper - this was before disposable ones. So we strung them up on a line in the bedroom, where the baby slept. It became so cold and damp that he got sick. I thought he just had a cold, but I took him to a French doctor who had been recommended. That doctor, after a rudimentary examination of patting his stomach, concluded that the baby had malaria. This didn't make sense because he had been getting a malaria suppressant every Sunday morning (which became a family ritual). I decided that I needed another opinion and after looking around I found a French female pediatrician. She looked at the baby and concluded that he did not have malaria, but indeed a sore throat. She gave him an antibiotic and that did the trick. From then on, she took care of our children's medical needs. I was greatly relieved.

After a while, we moved into a house that had a backyard and play area for the children. They found some playmates and the family finally settled in. But the beginning of our assignment was an extremely difficult experience. As I mentioned before, we had been instructed to buy all sorts of "necessities" from a wholesaler only to find that there was no storage area, even in the house. So we finally boarded up the garage, put in a dehumidifier, and locked the outside doors to make a storage area. It was obvious that the Embassy's well-intentioned suggestions did not take into account some of the practical problems on the ground.

Q: One would think that once a person has experienced living in a place like the Ivory Coast, he or she could pass it on to someone else, but it doesn't seem to happen often enough. There must have been at least two turnovers of staff since independence.

OAKLEY: That's right. Today, I think arriving at a post is entirely different and much easier. Posts are well set up to receive newcomers with FLOs and CLOs so that young officers don't have to face what we had to in Abidjan. Many people don't remember what it was like arriving at previous posts, especially with babies. But as I said, we finally moved into a second, larger house, and we developed systems and friends, and life became considerably easier.

In the course of settling in, we met two young American couples. One was in private industry with a minerals company, and he traveled a lot buying and selling minerals up and down the coast of Africa. The other couple was with the embassy. The six of us just became inseparable. We all had young children and we did a lot of things together. We all loved sports and the beach. By this time, people were beginning to go to the Atlantic Ocean beaches out of town on Sundays. Abidjan itself was built on lagoons that meant you had to cross several bridges to get from your section of town to the beach. There were coconut plantations right up to the shore, and people managed to find and rent small plots under the palms on which they had built what were called "chalets" - small huts where one could change into bathing suits. Many also had covered areas under thatch where you could eat under cover on rough tables and benches. Once a few started this new approach to weekend recreation, the area took off and many young foreigners and diplomats built these small huts, all heading out to the beach on Sunday afternoons. Swimming was very dangerous because of the Atlantic surf breaking full force right on the beach. I had swum in competition in high school and we all were basically good swimmers, but we never went into the water alone. The rip tides were very dangerous; if you were caught in one you felt as if you were inside a washing machine, being tumbled over and over agaiOne would lose all sense of direction and not know up from down. Some lost their bathing suits and had to stand where they could wave for someone to come out with a towel. It was just very rugged but exhilarating and we were very careful, particularly with the children, whom we did not allow to get too close to the surf. It was fun, even though we were very prudent. We did sometimes go beyond the breakers to where we could swim, but only in very calm waters. It was very, very dangerous surf.

We also played volleyball. We would set up a net, mark the court, and play in the afternoons after lunch, followed by dips in the ocean. We had marvelous gourmet luncheons a la francaise as everybody brought a dish or two.

However, as idyllic as it sounds, the beach also turned out to be the site of one of our most terrifying days. One afternoon, our two-year old son was playing in the sand while we were eating and cleaning up from lunch. No one was paying any particular attention to this child, as he was quiet and happy. He must have just wandered away and we when we looked we couldn't find him. Bob and I began to circle the area looking for him. We did not think he had entered the water by himself, but we couldn't be sure. We walked in ever increasing circles with no luck and Bob and I were about to collapse in fear and dread. Luckily, one of our close friends with presence of mind got into his car and drove in the direction that Tommy would most likely have gone, parked, and then walked back on the beach toward where we were. Along the way, he met a wonderful black man who was carrying Tommy. He apparently had tired and lay down in some dunes and gone to sleep. I still shudder at the memory; the Ivorian man was our hero and I thanked him properly.

Q: What was your impression of the Ivory Coast at that time?

OAKLEY: In contrast to the Sudan, we thought it much harder to make friends. The Ivorians were much more reserved and we were not native French speakers. We could get by in that language in social situations, but complicated political discussions, for example, were beyond my knowledge. It was a closed, inward looking society with obvious legacies from the colonial days so that it was much more difficult to get to know people than in the SudaSlowly, we developed a group of "mixed" friends - children of mixed marriages between French and Ivorians, a young Italian bachelor diplomat, a few businesspeople. That gave us the opportunity to get to know people better, but it was a much harder road to travel than in Khartoum. I never felt that I had any close Ivorian women friends. I did teach an English course for USIA, but even that did not give the kind of access to local women that I would have liked to have had. There was no women's association, no group that would allow some social interaction. In Abidjan, there was no system of calling on other diplomats; those we did meet were at the same diplomatic functions. So I found it more difficult to get to know people and to feel at home in Abidjan. I never really felt that I was making much of a contribution to life there.

I did have one of my life's funniest experiences in Abidjan. As I mentioned, I had a Nigerian nanny for the children and she was a powerhouse. She would argue and seem very upset at times, and then all of a sudden break out laughing. She was basically good humored and knew what she was doing. One day, she came to me and told me that she needed to go to a doctor, being concerned about the health of our children if she were not treated. She told me that she thought she had syphilis. (I suspected she had had it before. We had no idea of what she did during her time off and she was jolly and fun loving, and attractive, too.) I thanked her for telling me and agreed that she should see a doctor. She said that she didn't speak French and therefore I needed to go with her. So I made the appointment and went with her for her blood test at the doctor's office. After her blood had been analyzed, the doctor called me into his office in an embarrassed way and looked shocked when I said I wasn't surprised with the diagnosis. I was wearing everyday clothing, not dressed up at all, looking young, American, and motherly. After he made a few comments about his findings, it dawned on me that he thought I was the patient with the syphilis! He kept looking me in those ordinary clothes and I could see that he was wondering whether I was a secret "swinger." I finally, I think, assured him that I was not the one whose blood had been tested; it belonged to my Nigerian nanny who was concerned about my children and who wanted penicillin to make sure that the children would not be affected. I am not sure he ever believed me; he kept looking at me to make sure that I wasn't just selling him a bill of goods! I will never forget his look of total disbelief when I tried to explain; it was obviously not what he expected when he called me into his office to have a "serious" conversation. That evening, I told Bob what had happened and it has become a standard joke in the Oakley family. Fortunately, the nanny got her antibiotics and her disease was controlled. Our children were fine.

We did try to travel a little around the country. We were able to use embassy vehicles for those trips so that Bob could visit some of the up-country commercial centers and development projects. Cars would break down; this was symptomatic of life in the Ivory Coast; nothing was easy. Bob got sick. He was finally diagnosed with schistosomiasis, a disease that he might have got while swimming in the lagoon. He had to take an arsenic cure that was just awful - the cure was worse than the disease. But he was cured. We took malaria pills, but I came down with a bout of that disease even though I was supposed to have been protected from it. Our regional State Department doctor confirmed that it was malaria. The children got sick with the usual illnesses - such as mumps and colds. I have always viewed our tour in the Ivory Coast as quite difficult.

Of course, it seemed a lot harder in part because we had two children. We also did a lot, as I said, with our Italian friend, and with a German diplomatic family and a young French couple. We all lived close to each other and remain friends to this day, our children exchanging visits in the summer. So I think in general it all turned out quite well. Bob liked his work. He felt that the Ivorians were making progress economically; there was interest in the Ivory Coast's development program that focused on coffee and cocoa development in the hands of small farmers. As Indochina reduced its rubber production, there was a growing market for that product as well. The French were guiding this economic development program. Most importantly, there was not much corruption, because of some very serious, tough ministers supported by the French.

Q: For many years, the state of agriculture was the measure that was used to judge the economic development of African states.

OAKLEY: Absolutely. We stayed in the Ivory Coast for two years. Toward the end of that period with another year ahead of us, I could see that Bob was getting itchy. The Department at this juncture was asking for volunteers to go to Vietnam. Bob thought that this might be an interesting assignment and he volunteered for it. At the time, families of officers assigned to Vietnam were still permitted to go, too. But by the time we were ready to leave Abidjan in June of 1965, the Department had evacuated families from Vietnam because of growing security threats. The embassy was growing by leaps and bounds and it was very challenging politically, but when families were evacuated, the question arose between us whether Bob should still go. He did not think he could withdraw and keep his head up with his friends who were going. How different the Service was in those days! If you had an assignment, you saluted and went regardless of the circumstances. I was not happy, but I understood that that was the way the Foreign Service was run in the 1960s. I don't think I would have had the same reaction later - or that we would have stayed married.

We made plans to return to the U.S. with Bob leaving for Vietnam after a brief vacation and getting me settled. My father had had a bad heart attack and was retiring from his business, Rawlings Sporting Goods Co., in St. Louis, and moving to California in semi-retirement. I didn't know anybody out there. Bob's mother and grandmother were living in Shreveport, Louisiana, and this clearly was the best place for me. I could rent a small house there with plenty of family and friends around until Bob was reassigned from Vietnam. He was supposed to come home every six months during his 18 month/two year tour.

So the children and I moved to Shreveport. Bob was excited to go to Vietnam - he felt it was a great challenge, the "brightest and best" were going and they were all convinced they could win in spite of the insurgents from the north. Bob was sure that that was were the action was going to be. That was the prevalent mood of the day.

Adjusting to Shreveport was both easy and hard. I had good household help for the children. Bob's mother and grandmother knew everyone in town, so I quickly was known and invited around town and made to feel a part of life there. People were very generous and kind, inviting me for lunch or dinner or for an evening's movie. I lived across the street from Bob's closest childhood friend. His wife and I became very good friends as our children were the same ages, and she remains so today. We still travel together for vacations. Now our children's children are friends; they are the fifth generation of a close relationship, which is quite remarkable. Our daughter went to the same school her father attended, with many family friends, so the children became quickly acclimated to their new surroundings. They loved playing in the neighborhood. I played tennis often and I did quite a bit of volunteer work - all very pleasant but not very stimulating. I had gone by the local college, Centenary, to see if they needed any assistants when I first arrived and was told they didn't, which was disappointing. Out of the blue the next May, one of the professors had a heart attack and a dean called me to fill in in summer school.

So within a week I started to teach American history - five days a week for two hours each day to a class of 60 students! I had never even taken American history in college, so I didn't really have the right background, but it was a challenge and a thrill. I had taken courses on American political thought, American economic history and American diplomatic history, and of course I had been reading avidly forever - and sat down to read the text book cover to cover. I walked into my first class and used up my lecture in 30 minutes - and then had class discussion. Somehow or other, I got through the six week course, learned a lot, and kept one jump ahead of the students - who, frankly, were not very good.

Q: What was your impression of the student body?

OAKLEY: It was mixed. There were a number of public school teachers who had to take the course to meet requirements. There were some veterans who had been recently discharged and were able to take college courses. There were some who took courses for the sheer pleasure of learning. There were some students from other colleges who wanted to get their American history requirement out of the way before the start of football season. So it was a very mixed group. I acquired the reputation of being very tough. I thought that this first working experience, teaching, was wonderful, and I have always said that if I hadn't had that experience, which required an active mind, I probably never would have returned to work later in life. This opportunity was pure chance and fate; it was an opportunity that no one could have foreseen. The following fall, I taught in the evening division - continuing education - for a whole academic year and that also was fun but thankfully less demanding.

Q: What were the campus sentiments on Vietnam?

OAKLEY: There wasn't much of an anti-war sentiment because Shreveport was a small southern city near Barksdale Air Force Base, a heavy military presence close by. I don't think there was any enthusiasm for the war, but in the mid-1960s, there was no organized opposition to it in Shreveport.

Bob came home from Vietnam for two visits. Once he returned on Henry Cabot Lodge's airplane - he was the Ambassador in Saigon. We had a telephone call during the second home visit, December 1966, with the news that because of his good work in Vietnam, our next assignment would be Paris! That was thrilling, as was the idea that Bob would be completing his assignment in Vietnam a little early, allowing us to start a new life together in Paris. We anxiously looked forward to France.

As I said, Bob returned from Vietnam twice during his tour for extended visits. I found these visits very difficult and strained because his return was not permanent. In his absence, I had developed a life of my own, the children were attending school, and we all were settled in. So we had a rhythm to our lives which his visits disrupted. We would adjust to his presence and just as we did he would be off again. I have often thought about this pattern and how difficult separation was for the many military and Foreign Service families when the men were in Vietnam, or Korea, or WWII at an earlier time. It was a very difficult situation.

Q: I had the same experience when I came back. My wife was a student. It wasn't easy. Obviously the separation did not work very well.

OAKLEY: It was a difficult situation for us and I am sure for many others, because these visits were so disruptive and temporary. In June 1967, Bob came home for good and that changed everything. I remember packing for Paris during the 1967 Middle East war. We said goodbye to family and friends in Shreveport, packed our station wagon, and headed off to Washington. Eventually the car and all these belongings made it to Paris. In Washington, we camped out with friends. Bob spent a lot of time in the Department being debriefed about Vietnam. He was asked why he was going to Paris; many thought his next assignment should have been in Washington on the Vietnam working group in the Asian Bureau and it was obvious that the EAP bureau would have much preferred to keep Bob in Washington. But we had our orders and tickets to Paris and even an apartment. Bob had stopped there on his way back from Vietnam to see what he was going to be doing and had rented a lovely, old apartment in 7th arrondissement, across the street from the DCM, on avenue Emil Deschannel, near the Champs de Mars. While the debate about where Bob should be was going on, we drove to New York, put car and luggage on the USS United States, and sailed before they could reach us!

We were all properly outfitted for an ocean voyage and what an adventure that was, sailing at the end of June from New York Harbor. Our daughter had been given a doll with clothes that matched every outfit she had. Our son had similar toys. Bob and I thought we would for dinner as was done in those days only to find it was too much trouble to get the children ready and fed first - we ended up eating together, early. There were a number of other Foreign Service families aboard whom we got to know. Most of their children came down with chicken pox, which required quarantine. But we had a fine voyage and landed hale and hearty in LeHavre after about five days. We drove into Paris on the 4th of July, where we were taken to a temporary apartment, which was quite satisfactory, until our permanent apartment was ready.

Q: You were in Paris from 1967 until 1969.

OAKLEY: Right. We left in the summer of 1969. This was a much easier landing - I had an American friend in Paris who took me under her wings and told me all that I needed to know, what schools the children should attend, where we should live, and she even helped us get a maid. Bob went to work and I settled in in August. Soon after our arrival, a Foreign Service officer in Tunis was PNGed and assigned to the Paris embassy, really to Bob's job as a place to put him. (I don't understand how Personnel did this!) At the same time, the Washington Vietnam working group had decided they really wanted Bob to come back, so about four weeks after arriving, Bob's assignment was in doubt. It was a very messy situation. In the end, Bob was probably allowed to stay because we had a lease. The work was divided between them - until the later arrival was assigned to Washington after about a year in Paris. Bob was working on just Africa at first, at the time of the Biafra War, and later added the Middle East.

I must say that our first year in Paris was very pleasant but rather dull politically. We had a lovely apartment and we settled in quickly, with the children off to their bilingual school. They were learning French with some adjustment problems, par for the course. But in the spring of 1968, the world erupted. It was May 1968 Les evenements de mai, 1968]. All of France was in an uproar - the garbage men were striking, the teachers were striking, the students were taking to the streets. It was a real upheaval in French life and it changed the environment dramatically. De Gaulle did stay on after his march down the Champs Elysees, but he had lost his luster. French society began to modernize in many ways. From French history, I think the French almost have to change violently every half-century or so. Change might not happen otherwise.

We made some wonderful French friends. We met again a number of people we had known in Abidjan and that was fun for us - it gave us some feeling of continuity. Then the Paris Peace talks on Vietnam began with Cyrus Vance, Averell Harriman, Dick Holbrooke, John Negroponte - who acted as a translator. Most of them were, of course, Bob's friends from Vietnam. Life stopped being dull. Sargent Shriver came as ambassador, following Chip Bohlen, and he was a whirlwind. It was a new France and a new atmosphere which was great fun.

I was perfectly willing to stay in Paris after the first two years. Bob liked the job, but found the Europeans too tame. He used to say that in Europe a crisis was when some country sent a stiff diplomatic note, not revolutionaries over the wall. He was offered a very good job in New York handling Middle Eastern questions at the UN, which were hot. He was to work for Bill Buffum, who was the deputy ambassador at USUN. Bob had worked for Buffum earlier when both were in IO/UNP. Bob thought the New York job would be more fun. So after two years in Paris, we moved to New York in the summer of 1969. In those days, Foreign Service families were on their own in New York - no one helped them find housing and there were no allowances. We didn't want to live in the suburbs, as it would not have been a "New York" experience. Finally, with the help of some people in our mission, we found a place at Kip's Bay, which was owned by Alcoa. We started in a two-bedroom apartment but after a year a three- bedroom opened up and we were able to spread out a bit, and have a few guests. The children went to the UN school that had a bilingual program. But I must say that we found the assignment to New York a difficult adjustment. The children particularly faced challenges; they had been in Shreveport schools for two years, Paris for two years, and then had to start all over again in New York for two years. They were placed in the French section of the UN school and that didn't work too well for our son, but was fine for our daughter. Once again, I had to find a church to join, doctors to take care of our medical needs, and grocery stores, without the help of an Embassy. Slowly, we became reaclimatized. I got a part-time job working on international affairs for the National Board of the YWCA, working basically while the children were in school. I helped the YWCA with their international programs and outreach; this was my introduction to the NGO [non-governmental organizations] community.

Q: What was the Y doing?

OAKLEY: The Y was quite neutral on the Vietnam War. It was much more concerned with social issues - racism, education, and welfare. It was not part of the large anti-war protest movement, which was often led by churches. The late 1960s and early 1970s were the beginning of the drug culture, very visible in New York. I saw kids on the streets begging for money to support their habits. There was a lot of tumult in the U.S. and New York had its fair share, even if much of the leadership came from the West Coast.

We had many friends who were, of course, old hands in New York, friends from college and childhood. We ran into a lot of UN diplomats whom we had known in previous assignments. The accumulation of friends over a period of years from different settings becomes more pronounced with each move. We were reaching the stage that wherever we might have been assigned, and of course especially at the UN, we would run into friends from previous postings. We enjoyed that. Bob really liked his work; he was working for Charles Yost with Mike Newlin and Bill Buffum, and others whom he admired. Then George Bush came as ambassador, succeeding Yost, in the spring of 1971.

By this time, we knew we were leaving on another assignment. We loved New York, but it was difficult financially, even with my part-time job, and our families did not have a "country home" outside New York for weekends, although my parents had rented a place for two weeks on Martha's Vineyard the summer of 1970. We did enjoy the hospitality of a number of friends who had weekend houses outside the city. Nevertheless, two years was enough. When in early 1971 Bill Buffum asked Bob to join him as political counselor in Beirut, where he was going as ambassador, we jumped at the chance.

Q: While in New York, did you have much of an opportunity to participate in the UN social scene?

OAKLEY: We were pretty far down in the pecking order so we were not included in a lot of social affairs. But as I said, we had a lot of foreign diplomatic friends and we enjoyed a social life with them, usually by means of small dinners. We enjoyed that thoroughly. I remember meeting Ambassador Chris Phillip's wife - Mabel - at a YWCA lunch. She asked me what I was doing in New York; I told her that my husband was in the political section of USUN, where her husband was one of the ambassadors. I also confessed that I had never met anyone I had not known before at USUN, New York. That fact, that there was no gathering for all the USUN people and spouses to meet each other, I think, began to have some impact and at least one annual get-together was started at which we could meet each other. There just had been no attempt to organize anything for newcomers before then, not at all like a small Embassy. That introductory effort helped considerably and I met a couple of wives of other officers in the political section. We did need some means to pull us together.

I enjoyed the things I did in New York. We joined a small Episcopal church close by, and I became the Girl Scout leader at the Central Synagogue. So I had a real entry into New York life, working with a lot of public high school students. In the spring, I took the troop camping with help from the New York Girl Scout Federation. We went to a camp upstate, great excitement for these girls who had never been out of the city. One camper leaned against a tent and fell, breaking her wrist. That was the hard way to learn that tent flaps were not walls! What an experience for all of us as we got her to the hospital.

I loved New York as did Bob, but it was exhausting and expensive and we didn't feel permanent, although we did the best we could. It was also very difficult with young children. We were ready to move on to Beirut in the summer of 1971. After two two-year tours, we were ready for a three-year post, which we had from 1971 to 1974.

Q: What was Beirut like in the early 1970s?

OAKLEY: Beirut was the Paris of the Middle East and it was at its prime in this period, before the civil war began. Our arrival in July seemed easy; we were met at the airport and taken to the Phoenicia Hotel, which did not lack for amenities. It had a swimming pool that got plenty of use from our children. The embassy staff were very friendly, calling on us as soon as we arrived and inviting the children to come to play at their houses. Everyone was eager to help the newcomers. After a short period, we moved to a magnificent apartment overlooking the Mediterranean. The embassy could not have been more helpful and all the staff nicer.

I have compared our reception in Beirut to the one we got when we reached Abidjan. Of course, the children were older and Bob was a much more senior officer; nevertheless you could tell how much embassy services had improved from one time to another.

The Ambassador was Bill Buffum and the DCM was Bob Houghton. We lived right under the Houghtons, who had five children. Bob could walk to the embassy, which was just a couple of blocks away on the Corniche, right along the Mediterranean Sea. The children walked in a group with their schoolmates to school which was also two or three blocks away in the other direction. They attended the American Community School. The campus of the American University of Beirut was right behind their school. So we were well situated and life was perfectly lovely. I still remember how people were so warm in their reception of the Oakley family and I think Beirut was probably the happiest Foreign Service tour for us. Everyone has happy memories of one special post. Beirut was ours. The children were in a good school and they were at an age when they were eager to learn. We lived comfortably; we had a beach chalet that we used in the summer when we wanted to swim in the Mediterranean. In the winter, we would go up into the mountains to ski. Life was relatively easy; good food was readily available. It was easy to organize one's life to do all the things expected of a senior officer. We knew where to get good help for dinner parties; so although very busy, it was not too hard to manage a full plate.

There were always lots of things to do in Beirut. We made a lot of Lebanese friends and had a lot of visitors. There were a lot of American journalists covering the Middle East who used Beirut as a headquarters. Beirut was also the site for banks, media, UN organizations; everyone wanted to be assigned to Beirut to cover not only Lebanon but the whole of the Middle East. Frankly, we had a great time.

Q: How did you find Lebanese society?

OAKLEY: It was almost too much. Lebanese were and are the most hospitable people on earth. I always thought that one should be able to speak two of the three main languages of the country: English, Arabic and French. I knew two of those before I arrived and took a little Arabic while living in Beirut. It was so easy to make Lebanese friends. The president was Suleiman Franjieh, who had a son named Tony, married to a young woman, Vera, who had been brought up in Alexandria. She and I became very close friends. The two of us would go to lunch and chat about everything. All that we talked about remained between us; it was not to be repeated either to the American government or the Lebanese government. She was terrific. She was killed during the civil war with her husband and infant daughter, which was such a sad ending for a lovely person.

We also became very close friends with an American couple of Lebanese descent who were living in Beirut while he worked as a lawyer. I had known him at an earlier time at Northwestern, although he was two years older. Our children were very compatible. We took many trips together in the area and they have remained close friends ever since here in Washington.

Q: Did you notice any rifts in the society that eventually led to its civil war?

OAKLEY: Yes. We would pass Palestinian camps on the way to the airport or the beach. They were just plain slums spreading out from the city. People used to make the same comments about these refugee camps as they made about Harlem - "We know that they are happy living there, they like it in there; it's the way they want to live, but we wouldn't go there ourselves."

We had some Palestinian friends, mostly from the AUB faculty. We knew from them that the refugees were not living an acceptable life. The disparities that existed within Lebanese society were blatantly apparent as well. Social services were provided by the churches or mosques on a confessional basis, as there were precious few governmental social services. The schools were terrible, the roads worse; much more could have been provided, but the leaders seemed more interested in business deals and the social whirl. Furthermore, they maintained that this was the way the Lebanese wanted it. But you had to wonder about this attitude and whether the country could hold together with such disparities between the privileged and non-privileged, the rich and the poor.

In the spring of 1973, there was a Palestinian uprising against government troops. It really ended without a victor, as both sides simply stood down. The Palestinians then came to understand what they needed to do to affect the way the Lebanese government was treating them. This was also a period in which the Israelis were conducting all sorts of raids into Beirut; they invaded beach houses and apartments to kill moderate Palestinian leadership. It was a time of intense and violent political activity as Arafat began to make his moves, culminating in Black September in Jordan. Thus there was great unrest among Palestinians wherever they may have been living. After this one episode in 1973, the confrontation between the PLO and the Lebanese government was suspended; neither side wanted to lose. The PLO went underground and the government declared that all was well. But in fact, none of the issues was resolved. The Palestinians hunkered down and prepared themselves for the real civil war that broke out in 1975, when the situation became more deadly with outside players meddling - and Lebanon tore itself apart.

Q: What about the 1973 October war between Israel and Egypt?

OAKLEY: That was another major political factor in the whole equation that I should have mentioned. I can remember that Bob and I were having a late Saturday lunch out of town with friends, when he got a call from the embassy that called him back to the Embassy right away. He explained what was happening along the Israeli borders, with troops moving, but we did not really know in detail what was going on. The Syrians and the Egyptians moved very quickly and seized considerable territory. The Israelis counterattacked with U.S. military equipment and pushed the Egyptians and the Syrians back, crossing the Suez Canal into Egypt. The Lebanese did not participate in this conflict, but were clearly supporting Syria and Egypt. It was all over rather quickly. Then Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy" started and various disengagement agreements were slowly reached. The dispute over the Golan Heights ended in a truce, at least for a prolonged period. Again, there was a feeling that nothing was permanently settled and what we had witnessed was just another phase of the Middle East conflict. Bob was in touch with numerous friends and contacts and kept up as best he could on rapidly moving events.

Also in early 1973, our old friend Cleo Noel, the U.S. Ambassador to the Sudan, was assassinated. This was another manifestation of the unstable Middle East situation of the 1970s. So our time in Lebanon became increasingly tense; there were periodic curfews during which all movements were limited. One time, we were driving to have dinner with a friend, who later became the president of Lebanon, and we got caught in a traffic jam, which made Bob very nervous, although we had taken off our diplomatic license plates. He felt we might be seen and targeted. We started to have a guard outside our front door; it was obvious that tensions were rising rapidly.

Q: In your social life with the Lebanese, was Israel a topic of conversation?

OAKLEY: Certainly. We talked about American positions on Arab issues, the role of the PLO, and what a settlement might look like, as well as Lebanese politics. As super-charged political animals, the Lebanese lived and breathed these issues and they would discuss their role and perspective in this part of the world at great length. We had friends in the embassy in Tel Aviv with whom we exchanged visits. It was important for all American diplomats in the Middle East to travel throughout the area and understand both sides.

There was a very active American Women's Club in Beirut with about 300 members. It sponsored language classes, bridge lessons, art and archaeology tours, as well as general travel. The tours were so good that a couple of the women who ran them became professional travel agents. Forty of us did a camel trip through Wadi Ramm in Jordan in late April, 1974. The club had a wonderful group of people. There were a lot of Americans in Beirut then, with business, the schools, as journalists, and visitors and the embassy had a full range of U.S. government programs: military assistance, AID projects, and public affairs. The UN had many representatives and UNRWA headquarters was in Beirut. So there was a large group of expatriates and diplomats. In retrospect, all things considered, I know Beirut was our favorite family assignment.

Sometime during out tour, we began to hear that the State Department was changing in regard to women. The issue of married women in the Foreign Service had been revisited and policies were changing - for example, women were no longer required to resign when they married. So I went to see the Embassy's personnel officer and told her that in light of the policy changes being implemented and in the likely event of a next assignment to Washington, I would want to apply for a return to the Foreign Service. The personnel officer suggested that I not wait until the summer of 1974, but that I submit my request right away. She knew that the process would take some time and she, wisely, was prepared in lend a hand in getting the paperwork completed in Beirut and submitted to the Department. So I prepared all the documents and letters required. That personnel officer was very helpful.

By the end of June, 1974, we were all back in Washington. Bob had been pulled out of Beirut earlier in the spring to be in Geneva if Middle East peace talks started there, but I stayed so that the children could finish school. I knew by then that in the fall my request for reentry would be approved and that I would rejoin the Foreign Service. At this point, I felt I could do it - our daughter was going to enter high school - the National Cathedral School - and our son was going into junior high, and we would probably be in Washington for a while. So the timing for reentry was quite propitious and soon after our return to Washington, I "came back in."

I should say one other thing about my decision. I have never denigrated the role of women and wives in the Foreign Service; I was "wife of" for sixteen years and know how difficult it is to manage a family under very trying circumstances and many moves. The management of children and a household and the required social life was a full-time job. We had wonderful posts; I did volunteer work when I could. I did learn what it took to play a contributing role in the Foreign Service overseas and it was an invaluable education. So I didn't reenter the work force because I looked down at the role of a Foreign Service wife.

Q: I certainly agree with that, but it is very hard to impart that point to succeeding generations. My wife certainly played a major role in my overseas assignments. I think that attitude changed later on, but I do believe that the U.S. had a much more solid representation abroad because we had these husband-wife teams that worked so well together for the benefit of the U.S.

OAKLEY: As I mentioned before, when we were in Khartoum, Bob's grandmother came to visit us and told me to watch the ambassador's wife and do everything she did because she was a paragon of virtue - managing the household, entertaining, and assisting the ambassador in making sure that the embassy staff cared for newcomers and others who might have needed some special attention. By the time we went to New York in 1971, I think this atmosphere had changed. Of course, New York was a unique posting, but in general the feeling of an "embassy family" was rapidly disappearing. People were very much more on their own, and it could be a big, lonely city, and yet I really didn't mind because it gave me considerably more liberty to do what I wanted.

Q: That brings us to 1974. Tell us what happened then?

OAKLEY: As I said, we came back to Washington, our first time back since 1963. That meant getting the children into schools, finding a house, and setting up a new household. It all got done, although some problems took longer than others.

Bob originally had been assigned to the Senior Seminar, but that was changed early in the summer to a position on the Policy Planning staff, although by the fall he was reassigned again, this time to the NSC staff to replace Hall Saunders on the Middle East. My application to rejoin the Foreign Service was approved and I more or less told that I had to find a job - no one seemed in charge of placing me.

I have always said that the Foreign Service was not society's leader, but a follower. In the late 1960s and 1970s, American views on working women and women's rights evolved - rather quickly. Society came a long way in a short period of time. On the other hand, it took the concerted effort of a group of concerned women in the Foreign Service to get change moving in that institution. The first major case was that of Allison Palmer. She sued the Department over its assignment policies and was helped by other women who also felt discrimination. She with others opened up a whole range of women's issues in the Foreign Service.

I remember that a couple of years earlier I had spoken with Cleo Noel, a very good friend who was working in the Office of Personnel. He had been assigned by Bill Macomber, the Deputy Under Secretary for Management, to develop the Department's defense of the existing policy on forcing the retirement of women from the Foreign Service when they married. Macomber wanted to know what tack the Department's defense would take. He was told by Cleo and others in Personnel that there wasn't any defense. It was a policy that had just developed over years and never reviewed. But the world had moved on and that policy needed to be eliminated.

I think also that as the Department looked at the issue of what to do with those who had been forced to resign because of an archaic policy, it recognized that it applied to so few cases that it was not worth a battle. It was simply easier and less costly to open up the system for those who wished to rejoin. Not only were there so few cases to begin with, but many of the small number who had left had gone on to other careers and would not wish to rejoin. I never knew exactly how many there were of us - I would guess under 20.

The Department's decision was certainly the right one, both statistically and operationally. It shouldn't have been very hard. When we were in Beirut, I knew that this issue was really bubbling in Washington. As I said, thanks to the advice of the personnel officer, I immediately applied for reinstatement when we heard that the policy had been changed as it indeed took some time. So my processing started in April or May, 1974 and was finished in October.

Q: You seemed to be right on the timing because Bob was a senior officer by this time and had been assigned to Washington. Were you concerned what might happen once both of you were eligible for an overseas assignment?

OAKLEY: One remarkable aspect of my reentry was that there was so little discussion of that issue. Everyone assumed that finally back in Washington we would be there for some time. The problem of the first overseas tour did not seem to loom very large at the time, either between Bob and me or in the Department.

I was fortunate enough to have Bill Buffum, our former Ambassador in Beirut, offer me a job in UN/P (UN Political Affairs) in IO (where Bob had started) handling most Middle East questions, including the PLO. I worked directly for John Baker who was the office director. I was struck very early in this process by how little I actually knew about the organization of the Department and how it worked even though I had been associated with it for many years. I laughed very hard when after writing my first cable our secretary came to ask me what "tags" I wanted on the form. I looked at her dumbfounded. I didn't know what she was talking about. The women who had applied for reinstatement and had been accepted were given no refresher training at all. I guess the powers-that-be must have thought that as a wife I would have known all about the organization and processes of the Department. In retrospect, one reason I was so green in so many ways was because these were matters Bob had never discussed with me. He didn't care or talk a lot about process. So I knew little about how the Department actually worked, but I did have some advantages in that I knew about Beirut and the Middle East. So I did not have many problems with substance, but I certainly had to learn from scratch mundane things like tags on cables and "memcons."

When I reentered the Foreign Service, as I said, I had had the experience of living abroad in many different places. I had taught American history in a small college in Louisiana, while Bob was serving in Vietnam. I had worked as a part-time consultant in international affairs for the YWCA, working essentially as an NGO. I had headed the American Women's Club in Beirut that gave me a some managerial background. So I was not exactly inexperienced, but I did find that none of this really counted when I reentered the FS. As I had resigned as an FSO-8, there was an issue of what new grade I should be offered. The first suggestion was FSO-7 but I thought I should be offered something higher - FSO 6 or 5 in light of my age and experience.

I had heard that someone whom I had known in Beirut, who clearly was opposed to allowing married women back into the Foreign Service, served on the panel that was discussing the issue of my new grade level. So there were hints of bias on the part of those who could not reconcile themselves to new times. At that point, I was happy enough to be returning to the Foreign Service so I decided not to challenge the offer of a 7. In retrospect, I made a mistake. It does take time to reach every level in a career system. I would have been better off to have reentered at a more reasonable rank. There was no one to turn to for advice on what to do with the Department's offer.

Also about this time, the Department changed its ranking system. It dropped the FSO-8 designation and reordered all personnel into a new system. I was moved up to FSO-6. Thereafter, I was promoted rather quickly and I probably made up for lost time. Nevertheless, I think, had I been given what I think I deserved based on my experience, it would have made a difference. I attribute the Department's position to outdated thinking by men who were resisting the expansion of women's rights in the Foreign Service.

Q: It is I think not a surprise that men feeling increased competition might well have resisted the new policies. But did you find career women in IO who also opposed the new approaches?

OAKLEY: Not really. You have raised an interesting question that I did not consider at the time, or since. I never received anything but full support and encouragement from the women in IO. We were a new phenomenon; I claimed, and it was undoubtedly true, that I was the oldest FSO-7 in the Service. Everyone knew that Bob was a rising star. The question was whether I could make it in the Foreign Service. Would good things happen to me - and us? Would it all work? In that sense, I felt I was given more encouragement than neglect or hostility, although I am sure that there were people who disapproved of what was going on.

Q: Was there any effort made among the reentrants to plea with the Department for some short reentry training?

OAKLEY: No. There were so few of us that neither we nor the Department were pro-active. So there was no training, no luncheon meetings, no nothing. I did have a long transition period with my predecessor, Xenia Wilkinson, which was very helpful because she spent at lot of time tutoring me. The other people in IO were also extremely helpful. There were two or three other newcomers in the bureau - a fellow named John Teft, who has just been named ambassador to one of the Baltic states and an officer by the name of Molly Williamson, married to an FSO as well, although she joined after marriage. We were all learning together. I think that most of the people in the office tried their best to help but there were a few who I think probably did not view the Department's new policy with enthusiasm. They also may have had some questions about how and why I had gotten this very good job in IO.

Our office director, John Baker, seemed a rather difficult and cold man, but I must say I now have more sympathy for him. He probably should have insisted that I get some training. I was very green and not accustomed to State's office routines and therefore probably not much help at the beginning. I had to learn all of this on the job.

Q: I think that is probably the experience of many Foreign Service officers who find themselves working on a subject (s) they know very little about. So learning continually becomes an absolute necessity.

OAKLEY: I must say that I did have a wonderful job. I was handling aspects of the Middle East that were never very far from the top of the UN agenda. My job was to keep the PLO out of the UN, the Israelis in; I must say I did much better on the latter than on the former - they were finally admitted in 1974 over our objections. We were all dealing with a continual stream of urgent issues, such as votes on membership and questions with the specialized agencies, which became proxy political battlegrounds for the Arab-Israeli conflict. It turned out that eventually I became the bureau's expert on Middle East questions in these specialized agencies. I didn't think my drafting initially was very good, but over a period of time, I think my writing became acceptable.

It was helpful that through Bob's job at the NSC, handling the Middle East, I met many of the Arab diplomats in Washington. We became increasingly friendly and they knew what my job was in the Department. I spent a lot of time in the NEA bureau working with people we had known in Beirut and other posts. I think that having so many friends and acquaintances was very helpful; I didn't have to go through a "becoming acquainted" period on a personal level; I could hit the ground running in that sense. I will admit that I had some uneasiness at times, because any woman coming back or entering the Foreign Service would have to face certain prejudices. I sometimes felt ill at ease, particularly when I didn't know my interlocutors. I wondered whether they would take me seriously or whether I would be seen merely as a token for some new personnel policy. I used to tell Bob that my worst nightmare was going to a meeting at which all the others rose up and accused me of being an impostor, claiming that I was really a housewife and that I belonged in the kitchen and not in a State Department meeting room.

Q: I am not sure than any of us have not sat at a conference table and wondered what we were doing there. I have wondered from time to time if I would be exposed at these meetings for my lack of knowledge on the subject under discussion. How long were you in IO?

OAKLEY: I was there from the fall of 1974 to July 1976. With time, I did learn the ropes and had a most enjoyable experience. The issues were interesting. I wrote a lot of speeches or statements delivered by our various representatives in New York at the UN. This was a new challenge and I found that kind of writing pretty difficult. These were position statements that we would deliver in a committee or sometimes they would be drafts tabled at the Security Council. I would take a crack at the first draft, then it would be passed on up the line, getting clearances from all interested parties. Most of the speeches dealt with sensitive Middle East issues, so the clearance process took forever. Our delegates in New York would be screaming for the texts but that didn't help to speed up the clearances. I just had to learn to live with the process and start early.

Q: In the 1974-76 period, who was our ambassador at the UN? Who was the head of IO and how were the relationships between the two principals and their entities?

OAKLEY: Bill Buffum was the head of IO, as I mentioned earlier. The senior deputy was Bob Blake whom we had known from Bob's earlier work in New York and Paris, where Blake had been DCM. We lived across the street from each other and our children played together often. So the Blakes were very good friends - Bob Blake was very energetic, positive, and helpful and I enjoyed working for him. I remember taking cables in to him for clearance late in the afternoon to get final approval and his having time for some visiting. We have remained close friends with the Blakes.

The first NEA Assistant Secretary I worked with was Joe Sisco. When he became Under Secretary for Political Affairs [P], he was succeeded by Roy Atherton. As I suggested, I knew most of these people because Bob was working with them continually. Joe, Roy and Bob Oakley became veterans of Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy." So my relationships with NEA were easy; I could discuss some of my issues with them during evening social occasions.

The first UN ambassador was John Scali who was succeeded by Pat Moynihan and then Bill Scranton. At one point, I was instructed to go upstairs to be the note taker in a meeting between Kissinger and Scranton. In those days, junior officers took their notepads into such meetings and had to submit a MEMCOM (memorandum of conversation) as close to verbatim as possible. I remember coming home that evening and sitting at the kitchen table, writing up the MEMCOM; fortunately, it passed muster. Note-taking for the Secretary became another step in my career.

It was fun for me to be back in the Department, seeing people whom we had known from previous assignments. I would often meet friends for lunch and very good discussions. I began to feel more confident about my work and status. In the summer of 1976, Joe Sisco retired and was succeeded by Phil Habib as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. This was during presidential campaign time, which ended in the Carter victory in November. Dan O'Donahue became Phil's chief of staff. Dan and I had known each other for a long time as he had come into the Service with Bob. His first task was to pull a staff together for Habib. He called to ask whether I would like to take the job of Habib's staff assistant on the Middle East. He warned me that there were no guarantees on how long the job would last because he didn't know what the outcome of the elections might be and what impact those elections might have on Habib's status and staff. Nevertheless, after talking to Bob and many others, I agreed to accept the offer. It sounded interesting, a step up, was in Washington, and I didn't have any other better options on the horizon. So by the end of July, I moved to the office of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs.

Q; Before we move on to this new experience, let me ask a few questions about the 1974-76 period. Was your focus during this period on the Arab-Israel conflict or were there other matters of interest to IO?

OAKLEY: Essentially, yes. As I said, I was handling Middle East political questions that arose at the UN and in the specialized agencies. The one agency with which I did not deal was UNRRWA, but I did backstop on it. I handled issues which touched on the functions of the old UN Observer Mission that had been created in 1948 and stationed in Jerusalem. UNSOM, as it was known, worked on issues left over from the 1948 truce agreement. Other groups I worked with were the observer mission on the Golan Heights as well as the team which was established to supervise the arrangements included in the Israeli-Egyptian Sinai disengagement agreement. All of these observer groups had different missions, different compositions - all very complicated. So I had to master what each group was all about and what they were supposed to be doing.

Q: I assume that by this time protocols and precedents had been established which made every minute change a major issue.

OAKLEY: Right. All sides were continually testing the boundaries of the agreements. I can remember one issue that arose while UNRRWA was still headquartered in Beirut. At that juncture, we did not recognize the PLO or any other Palestinian representative. The DCM in Beirut, an old friend, called UNP with an immediate problem for which he needed instructions. The issue was what the U.S. delegation should do if Palestinian representatives were allowed to attend some UNRRWA meetings. He was surprised to hear my voice at the other end of the phone; he had known me as a "wife" and said, "Phyllis, is that you in the chair?" I assured him that it was indeed the very same person, and I told how I had come to this job in IO. I said the instructions were that we could not attend meetings where there were Palestinian representatives, but that at the same time we did not want to leave the organization. Finally, just off the top of my head, I suggested that if and when the Palestinians entered the room, he leave the room, but also leave his coat on the chair that he had occupied so they would know he was coming back. The DCM thought that was brilliant; furthermore there were no other very good alternatives. And that is the way it worked out.

There was another difficult issue when a large civil aviation meeting (ICAO) took place in Seattle. The issues kept narrowing and becoming more difficult - our delegation kept calling to find out what positions to take. Often, they would tell me that the meeting was starting in five minutes and ask what were they supposed to do. I had to focus and come up with some strategy. There wasn't time for prolonged consultations or clearances, so I would tell the caller what I though he ought to do. I told him that I would inform the appropriate office directors and deputies, but that unless he heard from us, he should proceed as I had suggested. That was just the nature of my responsibilities. Sometimes I had to run through the halls to get some clearance or other. I wished for rollerskates.

Q: This was the time when Zionism was equated with racism. Did you run into that?

OAKLEY: Yes, indeed. We defeated those at the UN who were trying to put through a resolution making that connection. Our office (UNP) sent demarches around the world seeking support for our position. I was the drafting officer on all those messages. In those days, we didn't have word processors, so the editing by all concerned and retyping was a laborious and time-consuming task. And the final copy had to be perfect so that all the carbons could be used as permanent records. The physical process just took forever and was complicated.

There were a lot of issues and time pressures to contend with. As I mentioned, I used to speak to a variety of groups. In addition, I would get loads of telephone inquiries. There were a lot of Jewish groups that were suspicions about the State Department. I am still amazed how far we have come; we now even have had a Jewish vice presidential candidate. I used to get calls regularly from one woman who I always felt was testing me. She would launch into a speech about how she opposed Israel and then she would say that she thought that our policy was wrong. Then she would ask whether I agreed with her. I would answer her by saying that I was a civil servant and only carrying out the will and orders of the president. I would explain to her what the U.S. stood for and what our policy was and what we were doing. She would then say that she thought that it was wrong and ask the usual question of whether I disagreed with her. I would patiently explain to her what our policy was and why it was. She would then say that she wanted the policy changed; I would suggest to her that that was what the ballot box was for. But I always felt that she was just checking on me to make sure that I was a devoted follower of the president's policy. She may well have been recording our conversations so that if I had made one little slip she could then have said, "See, you can't trust that State Department! It is just filled with anti-Zionists and anti-Semitics!"

I spent enormous amounts of time with this woman, always concluding that if she wanted the policy changed, she would have to go to the ballot box to register her opposition.

Q: Did you find any anti-Israeli or pro-Israeli groups within the Department?

OAKLEY: No. I always felt that there were many people who believed that we were not treating the Arabs fairly and that, for domestic political reasons, the administration was giving too much support to Israel. There were some who felt that what the Israelis were doing to the Palestinians was not morally right. But I think everybody agreed that the peace process was the right approach to resolve the conflict. It would undoubtedly take time and every step would be arduous, but it was important to keep at it if we were to reach our goals of a peaceful settlement. We are now talking about the period following the 1973 war, when disengagement agreements were being worked out one at a time, and the crowning achievement of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. So progress was being made and has continued in fits and starts; today we are discussing the future of Jerusalem and refugees and water distribution, etc, or at least we were until the latest Intifada. We are even talking about the creation of a Palestinian state. There has not been a major war since 1973, although Palestine is not yet established and at peace. I think that for most Americans and most people in the Middle East, the thought of returning to all out international war is just beyond imagination. There has been a commitment to negotiations. Arafat and Barak were not threatening conflict; they were negotiating.

Q: How did the "Watergate" scandal and the presidential succession effect your work?

OAKLEY: I think Ford deserves a great deal of credit for taking over and preserving stability in the midst of a domestic crisis, period. He was familiar with government from his long service on the Hill. He had good judgement, that has been confirmed over time, and was a very decent man. Henry Kissinger continued to run foreign policy. So I didn't see any major changes in our policies and positions.

Q: What was IO's view of Kissinger? Was he seen as neglecting the UN or did he seem to have accepted it as a focal point?

OAKLEY: I think he used the UN to our advantage. I don't think strengthening the United Nations was at the top of his agenda, but he was careful about it. He seemed to run a good State Department. He was a good manager; he kept his hands on lots of issues and would comment on most of the papers that were sent to him. They would be sent back to the drafter who then had a better feel of what the secretary had in mind. By this time, he knew how the bureaucracy worked - whether he had to get presidential approval of a certain decision or whether he could work things out with Congress. The State Department, in this era, seemed to have enough money to manage what needed to be done. Not only was Kissinger handling the Middle East, but was also deeply involved in all Cold War issues such as relations with the Soviet Union, and with China. He was a very, very busy man. He had to handle the oil crisis of 1973. He managed all of these difficult issues and was able to seize opportunities when they were presented. In retrospect, I think the continuity of U.S. foreign policy during a presidential crisis and transition was remarkable, and that certainly was due to Kissinger's abilities.

Q: Did you get involved very much in Soviet issues?

OAKLEY: It was not a focus for me. In any case, my hands were more than full with the Middle East. But we always had to be wary lest the Soviet Union try to outflank us and use our support of Israel against us. The Soviets were very active diplomatically and we had to watch carefully what they were doing.

Q: Were we concerned about some of the positions our allies, like the French, were taking?

OAKLEY: Of course, but it was not a major consideration. This was a very different period in the Cold War. The Atlantic Alliance was much stronger; it held together well because of the common enemy. There may have been some differences in views, but in the mid-'70s the unity of the alliance was clear. That may have changed toward the end of the decade when we ran into major difficulties in Iran, but during the period we are discussing, we were very close to our European allies.

Q: I assume that in the mid-'70s, the NEA bureau was very much in lock-step with IO?

OAKLEY: Absolutely. I had very close working relationships with that bureau, particularly with those offices involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. One of the NEA officers told me one day that he thought that he spent more time with me than my husband did.

Q: If nothing else, Israeli-Arab tensions proved to be a great training ground for U.S. diplomats and certainly fostered cooperation within the Department.

OAKLEY: I would like to make a further observation about this period. As I was reentering the Foreign Service and learning a new trade, a new organization, new processes, etc., my husband undertook a very demanding job, as part of the "shuttle diplomacy" team. So he was gone much of the time. Our daughter was starting high school at National Cathedral School and our son, who after one year in public school, was starting at the Edmund Burke School. He was in his early teens, which is a challenging age for any parent. For our first year in Washington, we rented a house; then we bought a house that needed some renovation. We moved into it in the fall of 1975. So I was stretched very tightly - between the office and home responsibilities. I had to tell people that I just had to go home because the movers were coming or the housekeeper was sick or I needed some days off to take care of the home front. This was very hard because I was needed in the office. Sometimes Bob would take a day off when he could, but he never felt the same pull of responsibility to home. Most men in that age didn't - most of it fell to women. We both would have to go into the office on Saturdays and generally it was a very difficult period with great overload.

I used to say that I had two teenage children, a new job, a house, a dog and a husband in that order. I did have a housekeeper, but she couldn't do everything. Those first two years were just plain hard. Bob and I would drop the children at school and then go to our offices. I would take the bus home so I could be there when the housekeeper left. I would then finish preparing dinner and feed the children. Bob often would come home late and grab something to eat, and then we would work with the children on their homework. As I said, this was a very, very difficult period. I had a lot to manage.

Q: I can imagine! You said that in 1976, you moved to the office of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. This was an election year, so that you really didn't know how long you would have that job.

OAKLEY: It was a great unknown. We didn't know who would win the election in the fall of 1976. It was clear on the 7th floor that people just assumed that I was available for twelve to fourteen hours each day, and one weekend day. I found it easier to be home on Saturday and at the office on Sunday. Bob was on a similar schedule. Finally, I said that regardless of how the election turned out, I could not maintain the schedule that was expected of me. As we all know, Carter won the election and appointed Vance as Secretary of State. Habib continued as Under Secretary. After the election, Bob left the NSC and went to work as one of Dick Holbrooke's deputies in the EAP bureau. There were some mutterings about my working for the Under Secretary when my husband was in a senior position in EA; some thought this was a potential problem. It was clear to me that Bob would continue to have a very busy schedule and I just couldn't continue to spend as much time in the "P" office as was expected.

I found out later - I didn't know this when I accepted the appointment - that I was the first female staff aide on the seventh floor. Until my arrival, it had been an all-male preserve; the aide positions had always been reserved for young males - officers who were real "comers." So I told O'Donahue that it was just impossible for me to continue on the kind of schedule that I had been working. A friend of ours, Bill Luers, who was working in the Latin America bureau, had an opening in the office dealing with public and congressional affairs. So in February, 1977 I moved to that office, which had more regular and shorter hours and it made life considerably more bearable.

Q: Let me go back to your experience in working for Habib, who is known as one of the great Foreign Service officers of all times. How did he operate?

OAKLEY: We had known Phil Habib because Bob had worked for him in Vietnam. Bob was always one of "Phil's boys." As I said, I think Habib took me at O'Donahue's strong recommendation. I didn't know Habib all that well. Occasionally, I would go into his office on a Sunday morning to give him his paperwork and brief him on hot items in the cable traffic. He would then ask why I wasn't home taking care of my husband and children! Today, that would be unheard of, but in the 1970s, it was still an acceptable question for Phil Habib. Furthermore, Phil had a secretary who was an "old timer," very protective of her boss; she didn't want staff aides around; she wanted to take care of the boss all by herself. She was a real gate-keeper. She took a particular dislike to me, probably because I was another woman who was encroaching on her territory.

Q: Can you give us a feeling for what it was like to be the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, which is the most senior job for a Foreign Service officer?

OAKLEY: Phil Habib's Foreign Service experience had been essentially in Asia. He had been our ambassador in Korea and had worked many years on Vietnam. He didn't really know that much about the Middle East and, frankly, he was not that interestel was supposed to keep things moving. Occasionally, I would catch mistakes in papers that were sent to the seventh floor; I would send them back to the originating office. I knew the NEA leadership trusted me to catch those errors and to work out new language with the drafting officer. But the Middle East was not Habib's priority; he focused on Asia, and on such questions as Vietnam and the Korean DMZ "tree cutting"incident - when some North Koreans attacked a platoon of American and South Korean soldiers who were trying to trim a tree that the North Koreans had deemed as "sacred." In the scuffle, two American officers were beaten to death. This occurred in the summer of 1976. It was a very tense moment and Habib gave complete attention to it.

Remember, we were also in the midst of a presidential election. It was therefore not a period of great foreign affairs activity; there were no new initiatives. It was essential, however, that the U.S. government keep things on an even keel with no major upsets. So we had to follow events around the world closely and, in the meantime, make sure everything was ready. That is basically what I did for six months.

Q: Did you or Bob or any of your professional friends have any unease about the possibility of a Carter administration?

OAKLEY: To a certain extent, there was some unease. I think there is always the fear of the unknown. Once the election had taken place and Cyrus Vance nominated to be Secretary of State, the unease abated to great extent because he was a known quantity because of his work at the Vietnam peace talks. Many people in EAP knew him; Habib certainly knew him. Vance also had worked in the Pentagon on some special studies and was therefore known to some Foreign Service officers. Everyone felt that he was a fine man and a very good choice. I think there was probably greater concern about Brzezinski's appointment as the NSC advisor and how the State-NSC relationship would work.

But I never felt that there would be any major changes in our basic foreign policy. What changes might take place, I thought, would be at the margins and not in our fundamental strategy or goals. I think most apprehension among professionals came from Carter's strong position on human rights. We didn't know what this stance would mean for our relationships with a number of our allies as well as what impact this new emphasis might have on existing policies.

Q: It took a while for us to adjust to this new view. As Habib's Middle East expert, did you ever hear him take a "plague on both of your houses" attitude towards the Israelis and the Arabs?

OAKLEY: There was some of that. But as I said, the Middle East was not his major interest. Being of Lebanese ancestry, he had studiously avoided the Middle East and he relied on Roy Atherton, the Assistant Secretary, to handle problems in that area. There had been some forward progress with disengagement agreements, and the area was relatively calm. The NEA bureau continued to work on the peace process and Habib saw no reason to get intimately involved.

Q: Then you moved to the Latin American bureau. Entirely foreign?

OAKLEY: Essentially, although I had been to Mexico once as a tourist! But this was the kind of job I needed and it was a relatively calm period. Bill Luers thought something positive could be done in the public relations field and there could be more public outreach. ARA did not have the front burner issues and importance that it did in other times, nor were its issues of primary importance to the seventh floor. So work pressures were considerably easier than those I faced in IO or in the Under Secretary's office.

The major issue that was about to confront the bureau was the Panama Canal Treaty and the return of the Canal to Panama. The U.S. was in the process of negotiating a treaty and President Carter was determined to push the treaty to a successful conclusion - the key to that was gaining support for it from the American public. The administration felt that it had to go out to sell the treaty to Americans. It was a period when the proponents had to engage in public debates; congressmen and their staffs were calling for speakers to go to their districts and there was a considerable surge of interest. So within ARA, a cadre of speakers was chosen who would be available to speak in public forums on the Panama Canal Treaty. We, from ARA and outside the bureau, were trained for two days, not only on the substance of the issues and answers to various criticisms, but also on debating techniques and effective public speaking.

Negotiations for the treaty were concluded by mid-1977 and in the fall I hit the road. I spent a lot of time on college campuses in "centrals" - Pennsylvania, Michigan, Oregon, and South Dakota (that was in January when the temperature was -14 [degrees Fahrenheit])! I must say that I got very good use of all the techniques I learned in that two-day training course and I did my homework. I thoroughly enjoyed the public speaking opportunities. Usually, an opponent of the treaty would open the debate and get bogged down in history before the turn of the century. In such a case I knew that my pitch was going to be heard favorably because opponents of the treaty had tied themselves into an era that had past a long, long time ago and which most audiences found interesting, but not necessarily relevant. Most Americans were interested in the future and how we could manage our relationship with Panama in order to have free and unencumbered access to the canal. There was more interest in the next twenty-five years - the transition period - than what had happened in the 19th century. Most of the public was well aware of the world's experience with the Suez Canal after the Egyptians took control. Passage through the Suez continued unimpeded despite the expropriation, except for the '67 war.

Q: I guess we can all remember when we were told by the British that catastrophe was just around the corner with the Egyptian pilots undoubtedly managing to sink ships and blocking the Canal. In fact, the Canal was only blocked during a war; otherwise the transit proceeded unimpeded. You must have used that precedent as an argument for the treaty.

OAKLEY: Of course. There were many other illustrations. I also pointed out that our soldiers would continue to be stationed in Panama for the next twenty-five years and they needed the protection of the Panamanian government. The most tempestuous debate took place near Hagerstown, Maryland, on a small college campus. The meeting was attended by some "rednecks" who kept talking about the dastardly deeds the Soviets were allegedly perpetrating on the world and how the surrender of the Panama Canal would put our security in great jeopardy. When asked what country was really being threatened by the Soviets, one of these speakers could only say that he could not remember, much to the audience's amusement, but he remained convinced that the treaty would spell the end for the U.S. In general, I had a ball giving speeches and participating in debates on the Panama Canal treaty around the country.

Q: Where did the opposition to the treaty come from?

OAKLEY: Mainly from older people, who kept talking about legalisms, but were in fact afraid of change in the world order. They were concerned about how the United States would manage this change.

Q: Were there any reservations about the treaty expressed by any of your colleagues? Panama was after all a different situation than Egypt.

OAKLEY: There was some unease, mostly revolving around the history of the Canal and the legality of the treaty. Even in the late 1970s, people were hesitant about making the argument that the Panamanians could not run the Canal. In the first place, it sounded racist and condescending and furthermore there would be a period of twenty-five years during which we could train the new operators.

Q: You were in ARA from 1977 until 1979. Technically, what was your assignment?

OAKLEY: I was assigned to the ARA regional office, which covered, as I mentioned, regional issues such as drugs and nuclear issues and public and congressional affairs. During the first period of my assignment, I spent most of my time on the Panama Canal treaty. Then the bureau was reorganized. Our shop was folded into the policy planning office, under Luigi Einaudi, and I continued to work on congressional and public affairs. Besides the Panama Canal, there were always issues with Mexico. Sometime in 1978 or early 1979, President Carter became concerned by the increasing waves of legal and illegal immigrants from Mexico. He decided that he was going to solve the problem. Unfortunately, the solution to illegal immigration was worst than the problem. There were jobs for them in the U.S., particularly in the south-west and California, but efforts to legalize their status in this country ran into all sorts of opposition and no one wanted to raise the immigration quota. In the end, we didn't make any progress, but it was a good illustration of how Carter operated. If he saw a problem, he wanted to solve it. But the issue of immigration from Mexico involved so many parties - states, labor unions, existing laws, and bureaucracies - each with its own position, that Mexican immigration was one of the most difficult knots to untie. The lesson I learned was that in trying to move from one point to another on an issue such as this, the process is very important because if used correctly it could move a bureaucracy or an interest group along by educating them. It is time consuming, but necessary if the goal is to be achieved.

I did get to go to Mexico for a few days to attend a meeting of one of the working groups. Mexicans, of course, viewed our policy as a fence to keep them out of the U.S. In the end, there was no progress on the issue despite all our efforts. The solution was just too complicated and the problem of illegal immigrants continues to this day. The only outcome was the establishment of a bilateral commission, with broad interagency representation, which then became the focus for addressing various immigration issues.

Q: What impact did the Carter administration's emphasis on human rights have on your work?

OAKLEY: It sort of made us unsure of what we should be doing. We had a very serious problem in Chile, but that issue was debated at levels far above mine.

Q: You are referring to the overthrown of Allende and the assumption of power by Pinochet and the military. Those events brought a major backlash in the U.S.

OAKLEY: Right, but for me personally those events had very little impact. They, and our policy reaction, were handled at the assistant secretary level and I was not involved.

I found the ARA job quite interesting and rewarding although with an uneven work load. There would be periods of intense activity followed by more relaxed, even dull, periods.

By mid-1979, I was preparing for my next assignment. Bob had been asked to become ambassador to Zaire. Harry Barnes was the Director General of the Foreign Service at the time and he worked out an arrangement that permitted me to work in the embassy in Kinshasa; this was a new personnel approach and I was the test case. I would be the first ambassador's spouse to be allowed to work in his or her spouse's embassy. The concern that had existed about potential nepotism was set aside.

Q: ARA, I think, has the reputation in the Foreign Service of being a nice assignment, but not central to American foreign policy.

OAKLEY: It was an area in which I had never taken much interest, and I spoke no Spanish. It is true that Latin America was not as central to my background as was the Middle East or Africa, but I was interested in learning more about it. From that point of view, it was a very good tour because I did learn a lot about the region and I enjoyed my two years in the bureau. The debate about the Panama Canal treaty was a unique experience - one that I could probably not have duplicated in any other assignment.

Q: What was the professionals' reaction to Carter's confidence in his ability to settle the Canal issue?

OAKLEY: Many said, "Lots of luck" and were extremely dubious that he could do it but I think most people in the bureau felt it was the right thing to do. Carter drove the pace of negotiations and the selling of the treaty to the American public. He wanted it signed, sealed, and delivered or approved by the Senate where he had the votes; he felt that he needed to abide by a strict timetable given the considerable opposition in the country to his policy. I think there was probably more grumbling in the bureau about the pace than there was about the goal. As I said, I think everyone in ARA felt it was the right policy to follow.

Q: Did you have many contacts on the Hill while working on the selling of the treaty?

OAKLEY: The administration's input in the Senate debate on the treaty was handled at a very high level. Gale McGee, a former senator, was employed to manage the administration's efforts. Carter himself was deeply involved as was his close staff. I think that they figured they had just enough votes to pass the treaty. Frank Church, who was the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, was a strong proponent.

J. Bennett Johnston was the junior senator from Louisiana and a childhood friend of Bob's. I went to sit with his wife in the balcony on the day the treaty was ratified. I thought it would be a momentous occasion and I watched as each senator voted. Of course, by this time, everyone knew that passage was assured so it was somewhat anti-climactic. Nevertheless, it was a very interesting historical moment.

Passage of the main treaty was followed by implementing arrangements. There were a myriad of detailed matters that had to be resolved and approved by both sides. That took a lot of work and ARA was involved in drafting legislation for such matters as the military transition. These issues were left for resolution essentially to the staff with only limited engagement of the seventh floor and the White House.

Q: What debating tricks did you use? Did you find that in, for example, debates on college campuses, it was the more senior citizens that had reservations rather than the students or the faculty?

OAKLEY: I used a lot of quotes during the debates as well as a lot of jokes. I think we were effective with students and faculty members. But audiences were unpredictable; opposition might arise anywhere. I already mentioned difficulties I had in central Maryland, but they could arise in Pennsylvania, or central Michigan or South Dakota. It was a fact that people in central, more rural areas were more conservative than ones found in urban and other parts of the country.

Q: Did you run into any residue of bitterness from the Vietnam War?

OAKLEY: Not particularly, which I found interesting. I think the nation's sentiments about Vietnam were still somewhat fluid; it would take a few more years before they began to jell and set. I suspect that there might have been more reluctance about giving something else up or taking on another major foreign policy issue if the Panama Canal issue had come up in the early '70s. But the debates in 1977 did not really touch on Vietnam.

Q: Did you ever run into a situation in which you, as a "servant of the people" had to take on a "representative of the people?"

OAKLEY: No. We were debating in forums set up by congressmen, but I can't remember one being there. Our goal was to explain carefully and repeatedly that the use of the Canal was what was important and not the ownership. The U.S. was interested in its use; the Canal had been important to us at various stages in our history and we wanted to be able to rely on its unrestricted use in the future. The argument was that our use would be much less subject to harassment or interference if we traveled through it in cooperation with the Panamanians rather than in opposition. The treaties were the best vehicle available to meet our goals; they allowed for discussion of all navigation issues. Furthermore, as the treaty was submitted to the Senate, there was an open and full discussion of policy. Senate approval would be followed by a twenty-five year transition period during which any unforeseen problems could be resolved. On the other hand, our refusal to turn the Canal over might just mean its complete loss to the United States through some kind of coup or military action or sabotage.

I should conclude this chapter by saying that I liked my ARA assignment; I was very thankful to Bill Luers for the job he offered me, but I really did feel that since I had no background in the area I was always viewed as an outsidel was not quite a member of the "club" which was not the situation in AF or NEA. I think it is true that you earn your stripes by working in an area; I had not, nor did I speak Spanish, so that I really was not a member of the ARA club. I think that in some ways the ARA club was probably more closed and tight than some of the others in the Foreign Service.

Q: In 1979, you went to Zaire as the wife of the ambassador and as a member of the Foreign Service.

OAKLEY: Right. We looked forward to the assignment; the continent was familiar and we were ready to go overseas. Bob had the excitement of his first ambassadorial assignment. Our daughter by this time was in college and our son was a sophomore in boarding school. So they were pretty close to becoming independent and didn't need our constant attention.

Bob left around Thanksgiving, 1979. I was left behind to pack up, redo the kitchen and make other renovations before renters moved in, and finish my assignment. I waited for the children to come home for Christmas vacation and then the three of us left for Zaire.

Before leaving, I looked for possible assignments in the embassy in Kinshasa. Bob and I agreed that the job should not be too close to the front office. There was an opening with USIA as an assistant cultural affairs officer. USIA still had a big program in Zaire; you will remember we had some very large embassies in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. USIA was not housed in the chancery so there was a physical separation from the embassy. USIS seemed delighted that I was interested in working for them and USIA people in Washington were very willing to go along with this new experiment of dual assignments, particularly since they were having trouble filling their slots in Zaire. Bob and I thought it was just the right assignment for me, both as a professional and as the wife of the ambassador.

Q: There was a pretty good firewall between what Bob was doing and what you were doing. He didn't have any direct supervisory responsibility and you would be working for an agency other than State.

OAKLEY: That's right. It all worked out pretty well. As I said, the children and I arrived in Zaire just before Christmas and in time to meet all the staff at holiday parties. The residence was an old, lovely building - probably built in the late 1940s or early 1950s - right on the banks of the Zaire River. When we looked across the river, we saw Congo-Brazzaville. We had a tennis court and swimming pool. It was a very comfortable residence. We were there from late 1979 until September 1982.

Q: Let's start by describing the situation in Zaire during your years there.

OAKLEY: President Mobutu had been considered one of our close allies for a long time. There was an on going struggle in central Africa against communist expansion, which was particularly acute in Angola. In 1976, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola had organized a Marxist regime with the support of a large contingent of Cuban troops. Zaire had itself gone through some rough moments in the early 1960s after independence, with a Katangan rebellion followed by a government headed by Moise Tshombe who was overthrown by Mobutu in 1965. In 1977, there was another rebellion in Katanga (Shaba) Province that was put down by the Kinshasa government with the assistance of the French and a couple of other countries. Shaba was an important province because it was the home of serious mining - copper and cobalt. Zaire had made a lot of money off these minerals that were vital industrial components. When we arrived, the government, using American companies, was finishing a huge power line from a hydroelectric plant on the Zaire River near Kinshasa, the capital, to the southern Shaba province for processing of ore. A lot of the Katangan and Shaban rebels had fled into Angola, and there was still some instability.

So Mobutu was certainly "our man" and he was supported strongly by the U.S. As I said, Zaire had gone through some very difficult periods. In the mid-1970s, in an economic decline, there had been a number of personal attacks in Kinshasa as Zairians became desperately poor. But this wave was practically over by the time we reached Kinshasa. We in fact were there in a rather tranquil period before another rising wave of Zairian desperation that led to open rebellions in the 1980s and 1990s.

Q: Was Mobutu being criticized at this point for corruption and management failures?

OAKLEY: Mobutu was always corrupt, or had become so very soon become after taking power. He always skimmed off a certain percentage of costs of major transactions or industries. I have heard people say that Mobutu had no concept of economics, and I agreed. He knew nothing - nor cared - about economic predictability or management; he basically ran Zaire as his personal fiefdom. Whatever progress was made was due to his acquiescence or approval; it was not the result of any systematic bureaucratic initiative, or any initiative from the population. Fortunately, Zaire had many assets - ores, oil, electric power, a good transportation system (rail and river), coffee, tea, food products. We knew that if there had been even minimal management and proper stewardship, Zaire was a country that could have grown dramatically in economic terms. Zairians are as artistic, musical, and intelligent a people as I have ever met in Africa. They were absolutely wonderful people, but there was no system to keep universities going or anything else moving in the right direction. There was just a complete absence of overall systematic management, with great corruption.

Q: What was your assignment?

OAKLEY: I had what I considered a wonderful job. As I said, I was an assistant cultural affairs officer, in charge of all the scholarship programs. We had had many Fulbright scholars from Zaire who had studied in the U.S. as well as American scholars who had spent a year in Zaire studying such matters as anthropology, sociology, or politics. There were some every year at the University of Lubumbashi as well as the University just outside Kinshasa. We had had exchanges going on for a couple of decades, from the early 1960s when our influence was at its zenith. By 1979, there were many educated Zairians who were very impressive.

So I worked on those exchanges as well as the international visitors program which sent about 30 Zairians on familiarization trips to the U.S. I worked out programs with them and organized their itineraries. I remember especially one dance tour that was sponsored by the African-American Institute in Washington. That was a wonderful, powerful dance group; it toured in a number of American cities and was well received.

Other staff members worked on press releases and contacts; we had a rather large cultural center. Others worked in the library. I thoroughly enjoyed my job and felt I met the most wonderful Zairians; they were the cultural leaders of the country - university professors, writers, and artists. It was just terrific.

Q: Today, Zaire is viewed as a completely dysfunctional state. In your days, were there functioning institutions to which these scholars could return?

OAKLEY: I believe so. I think most if not all of the people who went to the U.S. were able to use their experiences in a worthwhile way after their return, at least for a certain period, but I must also say that deterioration of Zairian institutions was well under way and was very visible when we were there. Nevertheless universities still functioned; they had visiting scholars and professors. These were obviously hard times, but the essence of the universities still persisted and they were active places of learning.

The city called Lubumbashi, near the copper mines which brought in a lot of foreign workers and influence, had a good university establishment begun by the Belgians. But the state did not support the system financially - or at least on an appropriate basis. So professors went payless; students had dormitories, but no food. It was the unpredictability of the arrival of promised resources that made management very difficult. We used to select university students for study in the U.S. and the government would promise to pay the schools, but the money would never show up. Of course, someone had absconded with those funds to Belgium or some other haven. The national Department of Education was a catastrophe; it never had any resources.

There were a lot of Zairians who had been educated in Europe in French speaking countries. They knew what an educational system should look like. They would return to Zaire and speak eloquently of their experiences and aspirations, but there was very little they could do about the problems in their own country.

Q: Wasn't this a discouraging scene?

OAKLEY: It was indeed, but on the other hand, we found Zairians so intelligent and eager to learn that we tried the best we could to help wherever we could. This was particularly true on the personal level. There were a number of organizations that provided assistance, both bilateral and multilateral, which tried to keep the financial system going; there was still a lot of interest in Zaire. There were strategic reasons, as I mentioned earlier, primarily because of the pro-communist regime in Angola. These reasons led us to continue to support Mobutu, particularly after Reagan became president and Jean Kirkpatrick at the United Nations took an interest in Africa; she promulgated the "benign dictatorship" theory that justified our support of people like Mobutu. Bob and others in the embassy kept saying that some standards of acceptable financial conduct had to be set because allowing all corruption to go on unchecked was not doing anyone any favors. In the end, Mobutu complained to the U.S. government, through the CIA, about Bob's attitude and requested that he be recalled. Vernon Walters used to visit Zaire often as the primary interlocutor and the conduit between the CIA and Mobutu. Walters had been the Deputy Director of CIA, our Ambassador to the UN, and spoke many languages fluently, and often undertook assignments such as these. When he came to Kinshasa, he would stay with us. Walters told Mobutu that ambassadors didn't stay at their posts forever and when Bob's tour was up at the end of three years he would be reassigned, but he would not be pulled out. This was the usual Mobutu game and he had PNGed ambassadors before. I think Bob felt that he had an obligation to call a spade a spade; he had to be true to the principals that the U.S. stands for. There were reasons to support Mobutu, but there also had to be some limits. When Carter became president, some accused him of being soft and allowing Angola to keep its communist government without trying to subvert it. But Congress had passed a prohibition on funding the Angola insurgents, the Bolland amendment I believe. In the meantime, Ethiopia had fallen to the communists, followed by Afghanistan that eventually led to a Soviet invasion of that country. All of these events raised some questions about the strength and staying power of the U.S., and that made it seem even more important that we continue to work with people like Mobutu, trying to keep their support, and at the same time trying to reform their regimes so that the large resources which countries like Zaire had would work for the benefit of the masses and not just the few at the top.

What surprised me was the acquiescence of Zairians to these deplorable conditions. They did not demand any changes; they accepted the corruption and undemocratic regime without rising up. In a country as large as Zaire, one would have thought that some demands for better conditions would have sprung up, even if it had to be done violently. But it didn't happen, in part because Zairians had such bitter memories of the events of the early 1960s after independence when the country was wrecked by civil war between various factions. People were loath to take any action that might bring instability again. Furthermore, there was no starvation; the standard of living may not have been as high as it should have been, but everyone had the basic necessities. There was some commerce, so people did not reach a point of desperation, although when you consider what might have been, it was a very sad situation.

I wondered why more people didn't leave the country; I didn't understand the attachment of many Zairians to their country, and especially those who had lived in Belgium or another foreign country. I came to the conclusion that large countries with established cultures, family ties, unique patterns of living, including stealing from each other, have a hold on people which keeps them at home and draws those who had left back to the motherland. This attraction seems to be true for Russia, China, Zaire, France, Brazil, and of course the U.S. There is something unique in each of those cultures that holds people and brings them back - "there is no place like home." Zairians loved Zaire and being Zairian; they just wanted a higher standard of living and greater participation - not a complete lack of corruption, some of which they seemed to accept. I used to say that Mobutu would let a number of people approach the trough, drink its riches, and go away able to live comfortably for a number of years. That group would be followed by others; which made for constant movement in society.

This was a period in Zaire's history when no one was being killed. Some would be held under house arrest and denied the ability to travel, but it was not a brutal regime. The brutality lay in the poverty that denied people access to adequate housing, food, education, and medical care; people at the bottom of the ladder had no chance to rise; they had no hope for a better future.

Q: Did you have any problem with the jealousies among the tribes?

OAKLEY: We certainly had to be aware of tensions among the Zairian tribes or ethnic groups. We had to know what we were doing. Of course, the embassy was trying to assure that international visitor grants covered all the various parts of society - men and women, north and south, east and west, teachers and business people, government and religious leaders. So our programs were fairly balanced.

I must add that at the time we were in Zaire, there were some mysterious diseases that were beginning to spread. One was a "monkey" fever, which we now know was the beginning of AIDS. We didn't know that then. French and Belgian doctors, people whose forefathers had settled in Zaire, were working in tropical medicine and began to examine these new fevers.

The Mission Aviation Fellowship flew mail and people to mission stations, in remote areas of the country and sometimes gave us rides. The religious organizations held the fabric of society together. They provided whatever there was of value - religion, medical care, and education - in that society. They showed real and deep concern for people.

There are a number of trips and visits that stand out in my memory. One had to do with the desire to visit all the American mission stations in Zaire. There were a good number of American missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, who had set up stations and hospitals and schools. Some of their families had come to Zaire at the turn of the century, so that they were second and third generation missionaries and doctors, very dedicated, impressive people. In one area, where it was thought sickle cell anemia had originated and then spread to the U.S., a number of American anthropologists - well known university professors - had come to study. One Yale art historian linked hand gestures made by American cheerleaders to some basic Zairian stances that he had he noticed. Learning from them certainly enriched my life.

Q: There had been a long history of tensions between the ambassador and the CIA station. Did you get involved in that at all?

OAKLEY: Not much, because Bob faced the problem within the first month of his arrival. He told the CIA chief that his and his predecessors' direct access to Mobutu might have worked for other ambassadors, but that was not the way the U.S. mission was going to operate under him. Fortunately, we had friends who were in senior positions in CIA and the Agency backed Bob and diminished the role that CIA had played in Zaire previously. There were attempts, naturally, by station employees to keep their lines open to Mobutu, but Bob squelched them whenever he found out about it, thus raising Mobutu's level of unhappiness with him. But Bob was the ambassador and ran the embassy as he saw fit and not the way Mobutu might have liked it.

Bob also had some problems with diamond organizations, like deBeers. They wanted to conduct their own foreign policy and had done so in certain circumstances. But those were just facts of life in Zaire.

Q: Did the CIA try to influence the selection of participants in USIA programs?

OAKLEY: Absolutely not. They would not have dared.

At the time we were there, The U.S. still had a big mission in Zaire. We had a consulate in Kivu, where there was a large Peace Corps training center. We had a large military assistance mission that worked with the Zairian military, largely on training. We had a large AID mission that concentrated, to large measure, on PL 480 food programs and on health care. As I said, we had a Peace Corps group. We also housed certain regional experts - e.g. doctors for U.S. personnel - who used Kinshasa as their base. Zaire was larger and had more services than other nearby countries and therefore it was a more satisfactory base.

In light of the importance of Zaire and its central location, there was a large diplomatic community in Kinshasa. We spent a lot of time with the Canadian ambassador and his wife, who were very active there, and with the French and Belgians, who had the greatest influence in Zaire. The British had representation, but at a lower level than the others. The Germans gave some money to Zaire as did the Japanese, and they were well represented plus there were missions from other African countries. There was also an international business community - Firestone, GM, etc., for the U.S. - but mainly European firms. This was an era when most other African countries still envied Zaire's light industry and infrastructure that had been maintained from its colonial period. So Zaire was an active place. As I said, I met a wonderful group of Zairians and Bob and I were able to travel around the country quite a bit.

Q: Was there some feeling that Mobutu would be in power for sometime?

OAKLEY: Yes, primarily because we and the Europeans were not going to get rid of him, assuming that we could have done so. We could have cut off assistance, particularly cash, but this was a period when the greatest concern was the Soviet Union. The western allies certainly were not interested in having Zaire ally itself with the communist camp. The Chinese were present and were very active and busy trying to increase communist activity and influence. The whole diplomatic thrust was to keep Mobutu on as straight and narrow path as humanly possible - extremely difficult.

Q: In 1982, you left Zaire and were assigned where?

OAKLEY: As we neared the end of our three-year assignment, it seemed it was back to Washington for the Oakleys. As we were leaving, Bob did not know what his next assignment would be. Frank Wisner, then the senior deputy in AF, called him and asked whether he would go to Somalia, and Bob agreed. That call was made sometime in September and our ambassador in Mogadishu, Don Peterson, didn't want to leave until January. So there was going to be a gap in Bob's assignment process. That was not a problem; it allowed us to settle back in and permitted me to find a job. I had decided that I would not go to Somalia because a) there wasn't a job for me there; b) I had been on loan to USIA for three years and I was anxious to return to political work; and c) at this point our son was in college and our daughter was in graduate school (Bank Street College of Education in New York), but they did not have a home base on the East Coast to return to during vacations and between terms. We found it very difficult in Zaire to stay in touch with our children and our families. Our son was a George W. Bush type - involved in much social activity. Once, while in Florida for spring vacation, he lost his wallet or it was stolen from him and he called his grandmother who, understandably, found it difficult to deal with such an emergency. So we decided that I would stay in Washington and Bob would go to Somalia. It was not an ideal solution, but we felt that we had to do it at least for a short period of time.

When we left Zaire, we traveled a little on the way home - we visited the Harrops in Kenya and the Athertons in Cairo and then flew to Washington. I had a little time before starting my next job in October that I spent moving back into our old house, completing small renovations as we settled back in. We got our daughter off to New York and our son off to his college; everything worked out fine. Bob went to FSI to study Italian before going off to Somalia.

I had applied for a job in the NEA bureau as the Afghanistan desk officer. The Soviets had invaded the country a couple of years earlier (December, 1979) and were in control in Kabul. We still had a small embassy there, headed by a chargï¿½ d'affaires. Of course everyone knew that we were supplying arms to the mujahadeen - the Afghan rebels, who were trying to throw the Soviets out. So when I became desk officer, I found myself involved in a very interesting and demanding task. I worked in NEA/PAB, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, which was headed by Harmon Kirby. I worked closely with a number of younger officers, who were assigned to the Pakistan and Bangladesh desks and had a very good time.

I felt that I had four main responsibilities: first of all, to support our charge and his staff in Kabul. When I started, the charge was Charles Dunbar; he was followed in 1983 by Ed Hurwitz. Both spoke Farsi or Dari, as the Afghans called it, and therefore could function effectively. I think assignments to Kabul in this period must have been quite interesting, reporting on what the Soviets were doing, what their attitudes and operations were, and what Afghan attitudes were. The second part of the job was to work with all of the Afghan support groups in the U.S., of which there were several. In retrospect, I am sure that the CIA supported some of these groups in their overseas work, particularly when the Soviets were charged with the use of chemical weapons and with egregious gassing of Afghans in covered irrigation tunnels. There were a number of charges of "foul play" against the Soviets in the 1982-83 period. These followed the "Yellow Rain" incidents that had taken place in Southeast Asia.

Q: From where were we getting our information?

OAKLEY: Primarily from our mission in Kabul. It was, of course, limited in its coverage because it was almost impossible to travel outside the capital. We also got information from Peshawar, Pakistan where our consulate had been beefed up. There were lots of Afghans who crossed the border with Pakistan and talked to the various resistance groups who were either headquartered or had representation in Peshawar. There was also a considerable amount of news reporting; there were a number of intrepid corespondents who would accompany the mujahadeen, take pictures, and record their adventures. It was kind of "trial by fire" for many of them because they thought they had to enter Afghanistan to "earn their journalistic spurs."

I worked with a number of NGO relief organizations that had representation in Afghanistan. Among these was "Doctors without Borders," a French group that was doing relief work in Afghanistan. There was a serious effort being made to try to support the mujahadeen, who were primarily in the eastern part of the country, so that they could continue their resistance.

One of the major responsibilities I faced was the issue of Afghans in the U.S. requesting political asylum. I had to review and approve these requests. The Human Rights Bureau did the basic work on these cases, passing on the applications from INS and as I said, I would pass judgement on the bone fides of the petition. Of course, all of these Afghans wanted to come to speak to me. I found it tedious to go through the paperwork; I found my contacts with the asylees and refugees much more interesting and enjoyable. Most of the applicants came from the educated class, who had been brought to the U.S. by an active refugee resettlement program that was based in Pakistan. The Vietnamese program was used as a model. It was interesting that the Germans probably accepted more Afghan refugees than we did. They also choose many of the educated Afghans; there had been a German high school in Kabul and other outreach programs that made migration into Germany a logical consequence. We worked closely with a lot of the German-sponsored refugee groups.

Various conferences were organized in Europe to call attention to the allegations of chemical weapons use by the Soviets. This effort had an effect. I think one could debate whether the Soviets were using any such weapons after the beginning of the invasion. As time passed, I think it became evident that some chemical agents were being used for crowd control but that practice died down after the issue became one of international debate. I suspect they began to realize how dangerous the use of such weapons was for their own people in Afghanistan. Furthermore, I think the Soviets realized that they didn't have to use such weapons; the bad publicity they were receiving was just not worth the trouble. I think that they stopped using these agents or weapons after late 1982.

Q: Was there any concern at the time about the mujahadeen's fundamentalism and the potential that had for the longer run?

OAKLEY: Not really. At this time there were six major resistance groups - Gulbaddin Hekmatyar was considered to be the most fundamentalist and the strictest. He also had the most effective fighting group and received a lot of assistance. Hekmatyar is still alive, but he has been eclipsed by the Taliban. But in the early 1980s, he was considered to be the most effective resistance leader.

In those days, PAB's job was four-fold, trying to keep public attention focused on Afghanistan; trying to take care of our small mission in Kabul; dealing with the Afghan groups in the U.S.; and trying to take care of the refugee and humanitarian problems. I was very busy and really didn't have the time to worry about the longer range potential.

Q: We know that the Afghan issue was of great concern to President Reagan. Were you getting pressure from the NSC? Were you aware of all of our activities in and around Afghanistan?

OAKLEY: I knew that there were a number of on-going clandestine activities, but I had no idea about the details. For example, although I knew that we were supporting the mujahadeen and that CIA was somehow involved, I was not aware of the dollar amounts - that was a very tightly held fact. I did not feel that it was my place to probe into those activities.

Early on, it was clear to me that to keep a resistance movement goinsuch as the one in Afghanistan - three things were required. First, you had to have a native population that was willing to join an armed resistance; there was no substitute for such local involvement. Second, there had to be a safe haven which in this case was Pakistan for the mujahadeen to use as a base of operations (although Pakistan denied providing such a base - "plausible deniability"). Third, there had to be outside assistance, which we were providing, as were China and Saudi Arabia.

The Afghan resistance movement was always conservative. In its early days, it may not have been fundamentalist, but it was always conservative. I used to laugh about meeting Afghan leaders on my various trips to the region. I knew that most leaders would not shake my hand; that was just something they would not do. There were two leaders who were not Islamic fundamentalists: Mojeddedi and Pir Sailani. They were much more western; both spoke English; they were quite sophisticated and had been well educated, as were their childreThey had relatives in the U.S. who were professionals; e.g. doctors. But they were never able to generate the same kind of support from the Afghan people as some of the other mujahadeen leaders. I think history has taught us that in a resistance movement usually one man rises to the top - such as Tito in Yugoslavia or Ben Bella in Algeria. That did not happen in Afghanistan because the Afghans themselves were so split by tribal loyalties and Pakistan found it could maintain control of the mujahadeen movement more easily if it were divided. By supporting the rivalries, the Pakistanis did not have to contend with one unchallenged Afghan leader.

Q: The Pakistani involvement was always part of the equation. They had their own game plan.

OAKLEY: Quite true. At this point, the Pakistani leadership was interested in "strategic depth;" in looking at the threat from India and they felt they needed a pliant Afghanistan behind them to face India's power. If hostilities were to break out with India, Pakistan felt it needed to have Afghanistan fully on its side. The history of Afghan-Pakistan relations is very complicated; the Pushtun tribe dwells in both countries and Pakistan's northwest territories are well known for their "independence." The Taliban did not exist in the mid-1980s, they came later and sprang up in part from Afghan conservatism - but during the period we are discussing, there wasn't the fanaticism we saw displayed in the mid and late 1990s.

Q: Was there any concern for Iranian involvement?

OAKLEY: Not really, because Iran was consumed by its war with Iraq. So Iran was not a major player in Afghanistan. There were a large number of Afghans from western Afghanistan who had fled across the border and had settled in eastern Iran. They were being assisted by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. But this was not at all comparable to what the Pakistanis were doing for the refugees in the Northwest Frontier Province. There, large refugee camps had been established. Some of these camps were closed to outsiders because they were being used as military training grounds. Camps were set up all over the province, particularly around Peshawar. In 1983, I paid my first visit to Pakistan. I went to Quetta where I saw one of the fantastic ICRC (International Committee for Red Cross) hospitals for war casualties. It was very hot on the day I visited so I wore a short sleeved dress, but I did bring along a shawl to cover my arms. I was standing in the hospital when a young boy was dying, with his father and uncle beside his bed. They asked me to cover my arms, which I rapidly did. The young boy had internal injuries, which the doctors found in most cases to be fatal as it took so long to get to the hospital. I had this feeling that I could not fathom what they had gone through, just as they could not comprehend what I did and why I was there.

People who had broken limbs or limbs blown off by land mines usually recovered. The ICRC, almost from the beginning of its efforts, established a prosthetic program, fitting people with devices made in India, which although primitive by our standards, were very effective and useful. I will never forget standing outside the facility watching someone learning to ride a bicycle using an artificial foot.

After Quetta, I went to Islamabad and then on to Peshawar. My first impression as we drove toward Peshawar was that of Afghans walking in thick dust along the roads. The streets teemed with them, all heading for international refugee organizations' headquarters to register and establish themselves. I thought Peshawar was a wonderful old Central Asian city, with an old souk, or market. I thought Afghan faces were as fine, dignified, and interesting, and as delicate as I had ever seen. I stopped in Mogadishu on the way home to see Bob. I really enjoyed that visit; it was a great introduction to the South Asia.

Q: Was there a focal point for Afghan policy?

OAKLEY: There was, but not at my level! I was the lowly desk officer. Certainly the Deputy Assistant Secretary and the Assistant Secretary were plugged in; they knew what the Agency was doing. But that was not my job. My focus was on the public face we were trying to present to the American public - about the how and why of what we were doing in Afghanistan. I wrote proclamations on the anniversary of the Soviet invasion that were issued by the White House - I wrote various speeches for our UN representatives on what was happening in Afghanistan.

I will never forget the call I received from Bernie Gwertzman of The New York Times, whom I knew slightly. We discussed Afghanistan in general and then he asked whether it was true that the CIA was spending $100 million per annum on the mujahadeen. I told him that I didn't know the details of such activities! I was dealing with entirely different aspects of our Afghan policy. After the conversation ended, I immediately ran upstairs and told my bosses in the front office that I just had this phone call asking about dollar amounts of CIA support for the Afghan resistance. I reported that I had told Gwertzman that I didn't know anything about it. Later I learned that my report had filtered all the way up to George Shultz; someone then called The New York Times and the story that was printed did not talk of CIA support. In the early 1980s, information about CIA activities was very tightly held and therefore it was nearly impossible for any reporter to get confirmation of what was going on.

Clearly the Agency, supported by the White House, was the engine that drove our activities in and around Afghanistan. I was the public front for diplomatic efforts for Afghanistan, but that was not were the action really was. Nevertheless, I found it a wonderful job, but extremely demanding. I stayed on it for over 2 ï¿½ years.

Q: What happened next?

OAKLEY: I bid for a Pearson Fellowship that would allow me to spend a year working on the Hill for some representative or senator. That was to be followed by an assignment to the Office of Congressional Relations (H) as the Middle East expert.

Fate intervened with all of this. On the fifth anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan - December 26 or 27, 1984 - right after Christmas - our office, PAB, was called about a television show. (The Soviets always maintained that they had waited until after Christmas, although I think, in fact, some units may well have moved into Afghanistan just prior and during Christmas celebrations. Most people were actually away on holiday when the invasion started.) We had had some earlier indications that there might be a discussion of Afghanistan on the McNeil-Lehrer PBS television show. By this time Herb Haggerty was the office director; when the invitation to appear came to him, he graciously said that since I had been working on this issue for at least two years, that it was only fitting for me to appear and represent the Department.

I went on the show with Senator Gordon Humphrey from New Hampshire, who was a fervent supporter of the Afghan cause and on the conservative end of the political spectrum, and Sig Harrison, a journalist who had long been associated with Afghanistan. He took a more conciliatory point of view, supporting peace talks to be chaired by the UN. Naturally, I knew a lot about Afghanistan after two years - what was going on, the political context in the U.S., and in the world. My view, which I expressed at the time and which turned out to be correct, was that there was no way that the mujahadeen could win the war. They would keep the Soviets from solidifying their control of the country, given the strength of the resistance in the eastern part of Afghanistan. It was true that mujahadeen had come pretty close to Kabul at times and did govern part of the northern area of the country. I continued that the issue of control of Afghanistan would not be resolved until other factors in the world played themselves out. And in fact this is what happened with the advent of Gorbachev and his new foreign policy approach, accompanied by the collapse of the Soviet Union, bringing about the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the collapse of the Afghan puppet regime in Kabul finally in 1989. But the mujahadeen did not defeat the Soviets.

When I appeared on McNeil-Lehrer, George Shultz was on vacation in California and he happened to watch the program. The next day, I had lunch with Herb and upon returning to my office, I was told that the Secretary of State had called. We were somewhat dubious that this had actually happened, but I called Shultz back. I was dumbfounded when I found out that all he wanted to do was to thank me for the good job I had done! That was one of the nicest things that ever happened to me. He later remembered that TV appearance, which changed my career about nine months later.

Back to world politics, there were a lot of other things that happened during the 1985-89 period, but it was really Gorbachev who decided to pull out and end Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. He decided it was not worth the cost to his country, including the psychological impact of returning body-bags on the Soviet population.

Q: I have always been puzzled by the Soviet strategy and have been looking for a rational answer. Was there any speculation in the halls of the Department why the Soviets invaded in the first place?

OAKLEY: There are a lot of theories about their invasion. There was considerable speculation about two events in 1979 - first of all, a coup d'etat took place in Afghanistan earlier that year that had installed some Soviet puppets. In response, a popular uprising sprang up which was on verge of overthrowing the communist regime. It seemed the Soviets would not allow that to happen, because they were concerned about a possible ripple effect in other parts of the world, and therefore they invaded Afghanistan to preserve the communist regime. This was also a period when we had pulled out of Angola after Congress issued a prohibition against providing assistance to the rebels there, and in Ethiopia, the emperor was overthrown and Mengistu took control. It looked like the U.S. under Carter was pulling back across the globe. All of these events had to be factors in Soviet calculations; they must have seen that the U.S., under Jimmy Carter, was being less ideological and not responding to changes which previous administrations might well have plunged into. In Moscow, USSR leadership must have been assumed that since the U.S. was so passive it would be safe to invade Afghanistan. In retrospect, I think all these factors had an impact.

The Russian puppet regime was quite ineffective but Afghanistan in the early 1980s was not beset by overall, raging civil war. Most of the country was quite peaceful. But it was the continual pressure from the mujahadeen in the east and north that kept the pot boiling. There were terrible stories about Afghans capturing pairs of Soviet soldiers and killing one, hacking his body up, and putting it in a bag that the other soldier would then have to carry back to the base. It was brutal and very violent on both sides.

Q: What happened to you next?

OAKLEY: As I mentioned, George Shultz had been impressed by my appearance on the McNeil-Lehrer News Hour and when there was an opening for a deputy spokesperson, he remembered and asked me to take the job. So I became the first woman spokesperson for the Department of State, a total surprise and jump ahead in my career. I think this episode is proof that one never knows in life what lies around the corner.

Q: I think your experience is just one more proof that the "system" does not usually find a job for an officer; it is done more frequently by happenstance or through the associations one forms during a career.

OAKLEY: That's right. Let me go back a bit. I should mention that as time passed, more and more people were added to work on the Afghanistan issue. There was a fellow by the name of Gerry Helman, who was brought into P to address questions about our assistance to relief agencies and to take care of the refugees. There was concern expressed in late '84 and '85 that all of eastern Afghanistan was being depopulated to such a degree that there were not enough local people to support the mujahadeen. That was when humanitarian assistance really began. Charlie Dunbar returned to NEA to worry about our role in negotiations; he worked with Diego Cordovez, the UN special negotiator, in New York.

Despite all of this additional help, it was becoming an impossible job. I finally decided that I would seek reassignment by the summer of 1985. I talked to various people, including congressional staff members, about what I should do next; in the end, thanks to friends like Caz Yost, I joined Senator Mac Mathias' staff under the Pearson program. He was a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and I thought he had taken very sensible positions on all sorts of issues, as a moderate, internationalist Republican.

I had fun working with the senator and his staff. About two or three weeks after I reported to his office, he announced that he would not seek reelection, which was a great disappointment for me because I was looking forward to watching a senatorial campaign from the "inside." Furthermore, anyone who declares himself or herself a "lame duck" loses a certain amount of cache. But I enjoyed the staff I worked with; I took advantage of every opportunity to learn how things worked on the Hill. I would periodically sit in on sessions of the House International Relations Committee to see how things were done on that side of the Capitol.

My Hill experience was fun, but it paled in excitement after my work on the Afghan desk. It felt very strange to have time to read the newspaper in the morning. The difference in pace was unbelievable.

I did go with Senator Mathias on one trip, to an Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting in Luxembourg. I had never been a member of a CODEL (Congressional Delegation) before - we had always been on the receiving end. The service that the military keepers provided was absolutely amazing; I would have hated to find out the costs. I have never seen such amenities.

I should also mention that while I was working on Afghanistan, I became acquainted with a number of congressmen who supported the Afghan resistance. The most notable of these was Charlie Wilson (Democrat, Texas). He was a member of the Armed Services Committee, and was probably the leading congressional supporter of a "free Afghanistan." It was rumored to he had helped the mujahadeen acquire a Swiss made missile, followed by the U.S. "Stinger." Many people say that it was the "Stingers" that made the decisive difference and caused the Soviet withdrawal, because they brought down many helicopters and raised the casualty rate too high for the USSR.

Q: Did you get any feel for congressional views of the State Department?

OAKLEY: I had first hand experience with State's responsiveness when I went with the CODEL - no way that the State Department could match the military. I also was amazed by the number of lobbyists who came to see Mathias, to talk about such mundane matters as the brand of furniture that State was purchasing. I had never been aware of the pressures that a Senator or a congressman was under to take action on what appeared to me to be a relatively minor issue - i.e. furniture for the Foreign Service. Seeing the pressures that are placed on our representatives was a real eye opener. People pestered Mathias to call the Department about furniture, about Jane Thompson, who wanted her job back in the office that handled "Arts in Embassies. All these constituents wanted Mathias to call the Department to make it do whatever they wanted. That was a revelation.

After a year on the Hill, I knew what my next assignment was going to be. I was going to be the congressional liaison officer for Middle East issues in H. So my nine months with Mathias proved to be invaluable. In the summer of 1986, I returned to H.

Once I started working in the Department again, I attended all NEA staff meetings. I worked with a number of people on a wide range of issues such as UNRWA funding and the peace talks. By this time, I had enough contacts on the Hill to make my job considerably easier that it would have been for a newcomer. Having had the experiences that I had had, I wasn't hesitant to speak out and really enjoyed that job.

Q: Did you find that the Israeli lobby overshadowed all of the Department's arguments?

OAKLEY: That was true at a certain level, but 1986 was a rather quiet period in the Middle East so there weren't many contentious issues. By the late 1980s, there was increased activity under the leadership of George Shultz. By that time, I was Deputy Spokesperson; that was a very active period with the beginning of the first "Intifada." That changed a lot of things. But 1986 was relatively quiet in the Middle East.

The one exception was Lebanon where the civil war was still raging; that kept us busy.

Q: Was the Iran-Iraq war a matter of concern? Or were we just observers?

OAKLEY: We pretty much sat on the sideline. Neither of these counties was a great friend of ours, although it must be said that later we tilted toward Saddam Hussein. We gave him some assistance. There was still resentment against Iran for its attack on our embassy and the holding of our staff as hostages. But there really wasn't much we wanted to or could do in the Iran-Iraq war. There was a general feeling that we didn't want Iraq to lose, although they were probably the instigators of the war.

Q: What was your impression of how effective H was?

OAKLEY: During this period, I thought H did a good job. I encouraged people like Roy Atherton and others in NEA to go to Congress. I knew all the people in the NEA front office. I thought they did a terrific job when they testified or just spoke to people on the Hill. So I encouraged them to keep in contact with congressmen and their staffs and to take the initiative. There had always been a question about H's functions. Was it a bridge to get more State officials to maintain contacts on the Hill or was it a dam which was to control the flow of information to Congress? It my days, it was a bridge and we worked diligently to get State people to talk to Hill people.

Q: You are not only talking about hearings?

OAKLEY: No. I refer primarily to informal briefings, which could be given by desk officers or INR staff people. The important point was that we had to be visible to Congress, beyond the formal appearances by the secretary or other top officials.

Q: Did you look with some envy on how the Pentagon handled its congressional relationships?

OAKLEY: Of course. The Pentagon has the great advantage of the means to provide services. Anything a congressman wanted or any arrangements for trips, the Pentagon was able to provide. It had planes staffed with stewards, and hospitality rooms - liquor, peanuts, candy, etc. - which were at a congressman's disposal. The Pentagon had financial means that were not available to State. They paid per diem for congressmen, for example - perfectly legal and effective. Essentially bills for hotels and meals, when not provided by the host country or organization, were paid by the Pentagon. So the Defense Department had ample resources. When we were in Luxembourg - as part of Mathias' staff - the delegation went to a china factory. People were buying whole sets of dishes! But the military was there to package boxes and put them on the plane back to the U.S. I didn't need any nor did I want any dishes, so I had money left over, which I returned to the congressional office, only to be told that no one ever did that. But I didn't see how I could take it. It was sheer surplus, gravy if you will, since all of my expenses had been covered.

Q: How was the Pentagon's congressional operation?

OAKLEY: We worked very closely with the Pentagon liaison staff. They made all of Mathias' travel arrangements. We had to know what these arrangements were, of course, and what program was being developed. This past year a recommendation was made to the Secretary of State that State offices be opened on both the Senate and House sides to improve contacts. In the end it was turned down by the Secretary on advice from Barbara Lutkin, head of H, who was concerned about losing control - very sad. I heard that she was worried about having officers on the Hill whom she couldn't control minute by minute. That was sheer folly. The Department had a grand opportunity and blew it.

Q: It has been said that often congressional people complain that their requests for information are often ignored by the Department. Was that a problem at this time?

OAKLEY: I have heard the same criticism. I am working with some task forces now which are addressing what is commonly referred to as "the culture of the State Department." One of the reported traits of that culture is that State doesn't want to share information with Congress. I have told people that I was somewhat surprised to hear that because in Washington and overseas that had not been my experience. When we were in Zaire, we were anxious to have congressional visitors. When we were in Pakistan, we had tons of CODELs. Charlie Wilson came out two or three times. It was great to have that much attention paid to us. So I never opposed sharing information with Congress and I am always amazed when Hill staffers complain about how difficult it is to get anything out of the Department. I understand State is often perceived as an organization that wants to run everything and wants to shut out other participation, even if perfectly legitimate. I don't know how that sentiment got started and has been perpetuated, but it has really hurt the Department.

Q: Did you encounter any reluctance on the part of Department officers to provide information without approval from their bosses?

OAKLEY: That was true on certain issues, such as what the CIA was doing to help the mujahadeen. I, of course, as desk officer didn't know and I wasn't interested in knowing because I knew that if people thought I had the information, they would constantly try to get it out of me. A basic question is how much confidence an officer has in his or her ability to handle inquiries. If you have a personal relationship with a congressional staffer and feel that you can trust him or her, then you can be much more open.

Q: You were in H from when to when?

OAKLEY: I was in Mathias' office from September 1985 to June 1986. Then I returned to H until late October or early November, 1986 when I got a call from Chuck Redman, who had just been appointed Spokesman for the Department, after the departure of Bernie Kalb. Bernie had been a well-known journalist, covering the Department, and had become the Department's spokesman at the request of George Shultz. I don't think that appointment in the end was a particularly good fit, because Kalb felt bypassed on some key information on the Iran-Contra affair. That story broke in the fall of 1986. So Kalb resigned and Redman moved up. He was a career officer who had spent most of his time in Europe and was very articulate. I think the Secretary decided it was better to have a career Foreign Service officers as spokesmen rather than outsiders. The job had to be filled rather quickly.

Chuck came to see me in H and asked whether I would be interested in the job of Deputy Spokesman (that was the term in use then). I was overcome - it came out the clear blue yonder. I had never even thought about it as a possibility. I was happy in H, but I saw the Spokesman's job as an opportunity. So in mid-November, 1986, I was announced and presented; I worked in PA until the end of January, 1989 when administrations changed and Bob was appointed Ambassador to Pakistan.

I never dreamed that I would be the Department's spokesperson, appearing on TV and radio and being quoted in the print media. I was a daunting experience. First, there was a training period that taught me the process of preparing for questions, and how to handle them. I had to arrive at the office between 6:30 and 7:00 a.m. Then we held a telephone meeting trying to anticipate what questions might arise, which was followed by dialogue with desk officers on what appropriately could be said. Desk officers were asked to draft potential replies. As the deputy spokesperson, I was allowed to attend Shultz' staff meeting at 8:30. Then back to the office where after 10:30 I would see a steady stream of people bringing us guidance on what the Department's answers might be to the anticipated questions. We would review these papers - some we would accept while others were sent back for more work. We would also watch the early morning news programs as well as read the summaries of the press prepared by one of our staff members. It was very important that we watch the TV programs because sometime they gave clues about what appeared to be of interest to the media. It was not a completely reliable indicator because TV news had to be so condensed. The real test of the media's interest came out of the stories in the major newspapers - e.g., The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Miami Herald (on Latin America), The Boston Globe, The Los Angeles Times (particularly on Asian matters).

Then off to the seventh floor to clear the guidance with D (John Whitehead, the Deputy Secretary). Finally, to the press office to review once again the list of potential questions and answers. Between 12:00 and 1:00 p.m., we would enter the briefing room and mount the podium, and try to answer questions. I would usually attend these briefings seated in the first chair listening to Chuck field the questions. In the last year, Shultz and Chuck were on the road a lot of the time, leaving most of the briefing chore to me.

I should talk a little about my first couple of appearances "on stage." Don Oberdorfer, the diplomatic correspondent for The Washington Post, had been my husband's best friend since college days. They had been at Princeton together; their names started with "OA" and "OB" and thus they sat next to each other and I think belonged to the same club. They were extremely close. I had some real doubts about being able to handle Don's questions from the podium - I couldn't imagine how it would feel. Fortunately, the first briefing went fine. At the second briefing, just as we were getting to the end, Don raised his hand and asked what I could say about a new fishing treaty between the Soviet Union and Vanuatu. I didn't have the slightest idea of where Vanuatu was! My whole life passed in front of my eyes; I wondered what I was doing on stage trying to answer that question. My first inclination was just to laugh, but I really couldn't because I was in public view in front of TV cameras. I pulled on my cheeks to keep from laughing and said, "I am sorry I don't have anything on that. I'll have to get back to you!" I must say that it is one of the most vivid memories of my life as spokesperson. I knew that somewhere along the line, Don would pull a stunt like that; he just could not resist the temptation.

My other vivid memory of this assignment came from our daily watching of the early morning TV news, which I mentioned earlier. Sometime near the beginning of the assignment, I was reading news items when all of a sudden I heard a familiar voice. I looked up and there I was on TV! I can't really express how surprised and shocked I was to see and hear myself on the screen making a statement. I wondered how I ever got there.

My son made the funniest comment of all. He was just out of college and living at home as he started his career. He said, "I was on the Beltway driving rather fast and I heard your voice; so I slowed down and put on my seat belt!" I am sure it came as a shock to him to hear his mother on the public airways, ever watching.

Q: Was Iran-Contra and the Secretary's role - or non-role - an issue?

OAKLEY: Yes and no. The Senate held long, televised hearings on the issue. Shultz was very effective as he was very well prepared. He spoke about "trust being the coin of the realm" and that "nothing was ever finished in Washington" (that is, the same subject keeps cropping up periodically). He said that he didn't know much, if anything, about Iran-Contra. It was clear that he was not the decision maker in this process; that was obviously done in the White House. There are many people who now insist that he knew much more than he admitted in 1986. I have read Shultz' autobiography and looked at what he had to say about this story quite carefully. I think he slid over his part. It was undoubtedly a complicated issue. You may remember that he was on a Sunday TV talk show one Sunday morning when the Iran-Contra story was breaking. Toward the end of the interview, Leslie Stahl asked whether he was in charge of Iranian policy. He answered, "No!" After the Iran-Contra affair had been put to rest more or less, Shultz appeared once again on her Sunday talk show. Stahl asked the same question and he said, "Now I am!" That was very interesting.

I should say that I didn't have a clue about what was going on with Iran-Contra. I found out about it after the fact. Bob was really the first one to tell me about it, as we were driving home one evening from the Department, as he had picked it up from his counter-terrorism work and dealing with the hostages in Lebanon.

Q: What was your impression of George Shultz as a person and as Secretary of State?

OAKLEY: I had the greatest respect for him and I thought he was wonderful. He held regular staff meetings that were longer than his predecessors; but still very businesslike. He dealt with people evenly. He established a practice of reaching down into the bureaucracy. In Public Affairs, we had three or four women who worked for him, making all the physical arrangements for his public appearances such as scheduling, teleprompter, and height of the podium. They loved working for him and he was nice to them; he cared about them. He was just a nice person.

I will never forget one of my first meetings with him. He asked me how I was doing. I told him that I hadn't given the store away yet. He looked at me with his Buddha-like expression and said, "It will only happen once!" I think he was joking.

But I must say that I was not at ease with him at the beginning - I held him in such high esteem that I was very nervous, unusual for me, despite the fact that he had invited me to chat with him on occasion. In retrospect, I feel bad about that because he was obviously reaching out to me and I didn't fully respond as well as I might have. I was too much in awe. In later years, of course, the relationship has become easier and much more informal, particularly at Princeton reunions where we joke and laugh together.

I will probably be best known for one particular comment I made in a briefing. This was about the alleged tattoo of a tiger the Secretary was supposed to have on his rear end - a souvenir of his undergraduate days at Princeton. We were laughing in the press office about what we might say if someone raised the question. People were giving all sorts of replies; one particularly amused me. So when asked the question about confirming the tattoo, I said, "I am not in a position to comment!" That became my 15 minutes of fame - I am still introduced by someone who will use the quote. Don Oberdorfer, every time he introduces me at a meeting, still uses that line. I must confess that I was not the originator; in fact, it came from one of the women in the press office known for her wit, but at least I used it at the right moment. Even George Shultz has found it the perfect "bon mot" and gets a real kick out of the episode.

Q: I must say that George Shultz in all of the interviews I and my colleagues have done, comes through as the favorite Secretary of State, both as a person and as a foreign policy professional.

OAKLEY: Shultz was a good manager and he reached out to lots of people. There is a story that when he first came to the Department, he came alone, saying he was not bringing anyone to replace the existing staff. He told them that he would rely and count on them. It is very much what Colin Powell said when he became secretary yesterday. Shultz held systematic and focused meetings which would include people usually not seen on the seventh floor; he would meet regularly with all officers of the Department. A story is told about the time, following a particularly tough period of negotiations with the Israelis, he walked down to the Office of Arab-Israeli Affairs just to thank the whole staff for their efforts to support him.

I must add that there were some of his policies with which I did not agree. For example, I thought the U.S. position on the "Intifada" was too pro-Israeli and not sufficiently cognizant of legitimate Palestinian complaints. I thought also he was too soft on Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon.

As I said, he was a very good manager, but not a perfect one. The Foreign Service Institute owes its building and upgrading to George Shultz who was always interested in training and education. I don't say that FSI should not have been done, but there were other needs as well that were not satisfied, although I believe that the Department, if the secretary had really wished, could have gotten higher appropriations from Congress. Traditionally when budget fights got tense, there were two or three congressmen and senators who at the last moment would come to the Department's rescue and convince their colleagues to appropriate at least what the administration had requested. That support was not evident in later years; things changed a great deal after Shultz.

But when people talk about management of the Department, particularly in the recent awful years, they refer to Shultz as the last great manager. Jim Baker did a lot of good things, but he was not a manager, nor was Warren Christopher, nor Madeleine Albright - I think we hit bottom under her stewardship. We must be thankful to have Colin Powell now who understands that among his high priorities must be the proper tending of the Foreign Service. When he was testifying recently, he said that while visiting U.S. installations abroad and comparing military establishments with those of the State Department you could hardly believe that both sets of installations were being supported by the same government.

Q: Did you have any problems with some of the questions that were asked of you?

OAKLEY: I had several reactions to briefings. First of all, I had been a good student and when someone asked me a question my inclination was to try to have an answer to give. But there were many times that I had to deny that I could be helpful or not provide full information, or that I had to say certain information was classified and therefore not available to the public. There was almost a hurdle to get over so that I would not give away everything I knew on the subject being addressed, and to stay within the approved guidance. I did improve on this score over time. But at first, I felt failure when I didn't give out everything. It was not lying (Shultz had said never lie - it had never occurred to me to do so!) but being careful.

Secondly, I never watched a briefing that I gave without thinking I could have done it better - clearer, perhaps more expansive, and so forth. In the late 1980s, there was one Virginia TV station that used to carry the daily briefings late at night. I used to go home and watch that, often cringing. Early on I had some help from a professional coach, Dorothy Sarnoff; I found her very helpful with suggestions on how to improvon such things as clothing, mannerisms, hair colors. For example, I felt that I looked down too much when answering questions. I worked with her and another woman on how I could answer the question by glancing at my guidance, but looking at the questioner when replying. I was, of course, mostly concerned about the substance of the presentation because I had to get that absolutely right. Presentation was of secondary importance. But any woman is under more scrutiny than a man and you don't want to be distracting by what you wear - or don't wear. As I said earlier, Chuck Redman traveled a good deal with the Secretary. He noted that during the briefings, the reporters referred to him as "Mr. Redman" and to me as "Phyllis." He said that everywhere he went, people would comment that he worked with "Phyllis." I think I had a good reputation. People did notice that I was the first female spokesperson for the Department or of a Department in Washington. After me, several European foreign offices employed women spokespersons. In light of being a pioneer, I felt added pressure to do a good job.

One of the things I enjoyed greatly about the job was, in the morning routine earlier described, our last contact with John Whitehead, the Deputy Secretary. He brought in Mel Levitsky who was then Executive Secretary of the Department as well as someone representing H, the congressional relations office. We would review the prepared guidance and discuss the hot topics of the day. There would be a give and take on approaches we might take in the briefings and what to look out for - the last screening. It was such a great pleasure for me to work with John Whitehead and to get to know him and to watch him work. I found him a wonderful person with good sense and judgement and a great sense of humor. John and I would at times giggle over possible answers - no one else saw the humor. So I became very fond of him and still enjoy seeing him in New York.

Q: What was your impression of the American press corps?

OAKLEY: Spotty. The role of the Department's spokesperson has changed so much over the years. It was Hodding Carter who first brought in TV, when he spoke daily about the Iranian hostages and what we were doing to get them home. That made the briefing more formal. Over time a lot of journalists had begun to feel that they didn't really want to attend the press briefings or at least not always. They were secretly working on stories and they didn't want anyone to know what they we doing - they were concerned that if they asked a question, it might reveal what they were working on to their colleagues. One learned all these various ins and outs of the press corps and their techniques to get information.

After the briefings, we would return to our offices and review the transcripts over lunch; we would also watch TV and listen to the radio in the afternoon to see what stories might have emerged from the briefings. Sometimes we would have to try to repair whatever damage a wrong story might have done - reporters don't always get their stories straight. Often, after this review, we would get calls from journalists who were putting the final touches on their "exclusives." They were seeking an official reaction to the main threads of their stories. More often than not, these were stories about issues we had not discussed previously, often because our policy on the issue was still being developed and therefore we had not been briefed ourselves, although we may have known some aspects. So we would have to tell the caller that we didn't have a comment right then and there, but that we would try to provide the answer as soon as possible. Telephoning then began all over the Department.

We also had an elaborate system for coordination with the Defense Department, CIA, and White House press offices. That coordination, I think, started with Ron Nessen, but it varied in form from one White House spokesperson to another. In the fall of 1986, we had an almost daily conference call with our counterparts in those agencies, particularly when Iran-Contra was the issue of the day. Of course, each agency was taking the position its principal did - occasionally this would generate some screaming because spokesmen would object strenuously to a position taken by another agency. During these very delicate periods, such as Iran-Contra, we would have to go back to the Secretary for further guidance or at least to tell him what other agencies were about to say. CIA Director Casey's role and position on Iran-Contra was very interesting and complicated.

We had periodic meetings, sometimes in the White House Mess, to discuss public affairs problems. When we faced certain arms control issues, quite often it was the need for press guidance that forced the administration to reach a decision. One time I remember using guidance cleared by the Bureau for Politico-Military Affairs, but they had not cleared it entirely with the White House. No sooner had I used it, than I was called by Colin Powell, then at the NSC, who chewed me out for about a half an hour - demanding to know how I could possibly have said what I did. I told him that I had been given the guidance by PM and hadn't made up the answer. What was happening, of course, was that PM was trying to force the White House to reach a decision and was using the public affairs route to serve its end. By the next day, Colin had calmed down and there were no hard feelings. I soon learned that on certain issues, particularly arms control, I had to get White House approval even if it meant waiting for a half hour or so and delaying the briefing.

I once used guidance approved by EUR concerning British reflagging of vessels sailing into the Persian Gulf. Everybody cleared my guidance and thought it was fine as it had been provided by the desk. But in fact, the desk had goofed. I was denounced on the floor of the House of Commons! The British press attache came to see me and in his usual proper, understated tone suggested that there had been a slight misunderstanding and asked that I correct my statement at the next opportunity. I, of course, did so, but this is a good illustration of the difficulties a spokesperson faces; there is no way that he or she can know the details of every issue and so you have to rely on others. On what appeared to be a minor issue, such as British reflagging, we would accept guidance drafted by the desk officer; on more important issues, we would seek wider clearances. I found after a while I could just feel that some guidance just didn't quite sit right and a warning bell would go off inside of me. Then I would check out what I had been given, either to be reassured or to have it corrected.

Q: What about the foreign press corps that attends the Department's briefings?

OAKLEY: Here again there were certain reporters that I thought were quite good. Many of the Lebanese reporters wrote excellent stories, particularly about the "Intifada;" their stories were balanced and tried to emphasize the core issues.

The attendance of the foreign press corps depended on the hot issue of the day. The Europeans would show up en masse if there were a raging issue of interest to their constituents. All journalists were interested in our summit meetings with the Soviets; one could then expect full representation and participation by European reporters. When there was a summit, the White House would organize the press briefing room. I remember going to one of these, which I think was being held at the Willard Hotel, and the room was huge - a ballroom filled with reporters from around the world. The White House would brief the press corps about any agreements reached with the Soviets, whose spokesperson also participated. At one point, he was asked what Mrs. Gorbachev's schedule had been with Nancy Reagan and as I had that schedule and he didn't, I handed it to the Soviet, who seemed a little reluctant to use it. But what the two ladies were doing was a matter of some interest and he did use it, with certain elaboration.

There were a lot of very interesting moments while I was in Public Affairs. I found the job stressful as every word I uttered mattered. Once Vice President George Bush introduced me at a luncheon at the Department to Yitzhak Shamir, then the Prime Minister of Israel. We had known the Bushes for many years - since USUN - so he told Shamir that he wanted him to meet the Department's deputy spokesperson. Shamir (very short) looked up at me and said that he knew who I was. He said that he read every word that I uttered! I was dumbfounded, but it was undoubtedly true - my words were read throughout the world. It was intimidating.

Q: I would think that whatever you said, you would often raise some heckles - as you undoubtedly did with the Israeli lobby when discussing the "Intifada."

OAKLEY: Of course, but I always tried to avoid trite phrases, like "the never ending cycle of violence." I tried to find other ways to express the same thought, for example by expressing sympathy for the victims. Once a Palestinian came to see me and told me that everyone on the West Bank knew my face. That was awesome and intimidating! But I would not have missed the opportunity of spokesperson for anything - to learn how the press worked, what the arms control issues were, how the world looked at us and vice versa. It was truly fascinating.

I used to laugh, in sorrow, because it seemed to me that when there were tragedies or disasters it was always my turn to be on the podium. The first one I handled was when we - or the U.S. Navy - shot down the Iranian airbus over the Persian Gulf. I had to face the horde of reporters, TV cameras, and audio equipment with two sentences of guidance, the essence of which was that we didn't know what had happened. This happened more often than not; I would have very little guidance from which to answer questions for 45 minutes. We would, of course, express sympathies for the victims and their families and express our concern about the incident. But there wasn't much more that anyone could say.

The other airplane crash that fell to me to speak about was PanAm 103. This was the one brought down in midair over Lockerbie, Scotland by a bomb planted aboard the plane. The recently convicted perpetrator was a Libyan secret agent. When this very tragic episode was later reviewed and used during the trial, my earlier briefings were rebroadcast. I used to laugh and tell my family that I was a "rerun."

Q: I would think that sometime even regrets might be difficult to utter such as in the case of the Iranian plane that we shot down by accident.

OAKLEY: No, I think regrets were always appropriate, but other comments were more difficult. In the case of the Iranian plane, I could say that we would or were investigating the circumstances. I knew from Bob, who was at the NSC at the time, that from the beginning there were some suspicions that our military had been "trigger-happy." Over time, I think the conclusion emerged that we had not been careful enough in determining what and whose plane was in the sky. We didn't expect a passenger craft to be in that area and therefore were probably not prudent enough before shooting. I had heard some of this speculation, but it was not something that I could say publicly. But I did regret the incident and expressed sympathy for the victims and their families.

I was asked on occasion about our contacts with Iranians, still a hot issue in the late '80s. That was a tricky question to answer. Were there any contacts, formal or informal? I had to know the background of what was going on or I might well have given the wrong impression or an answer that might well have been used against us. The TV broadcasters were anxious to use my answers on these contacts. I finally said to one of the reporters, "Baloney!" You had to be careful about what sound bites might appear on the airwaves, but I thought this was emphatic and clear without being derogatory.

I remember during the "Lockerbie" briefings talking about how families who had lost loved ones must have been feeling - their children were returning to the U.S. for Christmas holidays and I truly felt their sorrow. It was a horrendous deed, so sympathies were not difficult. We did pledge to help the families as much as we could and then follow up with a thorough investigation.

I should mention that press guidance and the appropriateness of briefings were taken very seriously. We were not supposed to be flip. On one April Fool's Day, I wanted to start the briefing by saying that we had concluded four arms control treaties, three friendship treaties, solved a number of refugees problems - all that morning. I was told that such an approach would not be appropriate. I think today the rules are somewhat less stringent, but in my day it was all straight and narrow. As I have suggested, occasionally my comments were broadcast widely. One day, I was answering questions about the change of government in the Philippines. Had it been a coup or how would we categorize it? I finally fell back on the old adage: "If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it probably is a duck! It was a coup."

Among the press corps were a couple of trouble-makers. They always asked difficult questions to try to put the spokesman on the spot. These were usually reporters from ethnic or foreign news outlets who were accredited to the Department - Greeks and Turks, Armenians, or Jews. One time, one of these guys asked me how I would respond to some question about alleged U.S. activity against somebody. I looked at him and smiled and said, "We would respond to that issue very carefully!" The whole room burst out laughing. Even the questioner said, "Touche!"

In the 1998 presidential election, George Bush moved up from the vice presidential spot. Shultz was to leave in January and the rumor was that Jim Baker would succeed him as Secretary of State. We had known the Bakers because Jim had also been a Princeton classmate of Bob's, along with Frank Carlucci. Susan Baker, Jim's wife, called me after the election to ask what I could do to help Margaret Tutwiler, whom Jim had picked to be the next Spokesman and Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, but not yet announced - he had not yet been confirmed. So it was quite hush-hush and we had to consult very discreetly. I agreed to stay on at least through a transition period and really enjoyed working with her.

My husband had been sent to Pakistan in early September, 1988, right after the death of President Zia and our ambassador, Arnie Raphel, to run the embassy as ambassador in a period of great uncertainty. We didn't know whether Bob would be retained as ambassador by a new administration. When Bush was elected and Baker became Secretary of State, it was decided that Bob would stay. Of course, in early 1989, there were major personnel changes throughout the Department and the arrival of a whole new team to run it. I wanted to join my husband in Pakistan so it worked out well for me to leave PA and go to Islamabad.

I think my whole experience as Deputy Spokesperson was a very positive, happy one. I continue to be amazed by that assignment; not in my wildest dreams had I ever thought of being offered a job like that. Occasionally, people in grocery stores or at airports would stop and ask: "Haven't I seen you somewhere?" I was and still am surprised by these glimmers of recognition. I thought that after a while people would forget, but I still run into strangers who think that I look familiar to them and I then suggest where they might have seen me. Once, one of Washington's famous columnists asked me how I handled "fame." I burst out laughing because I knew that my job as Spokesperson was not permanent and that I would leave the limelight sooner or later. I replied that I might be recognized at the time, but I didn't expect it to be a permanent condition.

Q: We are now in 1989 and you are now in Pakistan where your husband has become the U.S. ambassador. How was the change from paid employment to wife?

OAKLEY: Bob's assignment was a jolt out of the blue. As I mentioned earlier, our Ambassador to Pakistan, Arnie Raphel, was killed in an airplane crash when he accompanied President Zia on a visit to an army installation. Zia had been our great Pakistani ally during the Afghan "jihad" against the Soviets. Arnie was much beloved in the Department; he was very bright, very outgoing, full of personality, and fully devoted to the Foreign Service. Many people were devoted to him. I remember the morning of the crash quite clearly. We were meeting with Mike Armacost, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, who was presiding at an August 8:30 staff meeting in the D Conference Room, when he was called out to go to the Operations Center. He returned absolutely ashen and reported to us that Arnie had been killed in a plane crash. The reports coming in were quite sketchy and no one knew whether the plane was brought down by accident, sabotage, or by weapons. This was mid-August and I think Shultz was in New Orleans at the Republican Convention. Throughout the day there were frantic telephone calls to Islamabad and it was decided that it was absolutely essential to send someone quickly out to Pakistan to assure the interim government that it had our continued support. The White House worked on a potential list of people who might be sent. I did a very short briefing, which essentially was just an announcement of the crash; I told the media that we didn't have any further information at that time. Everybody was absolutely stunned.

In the afternoon, back in my office trying to catch up, Bob called - he was then the senior advisor on the Near East at the NSC (his jurisdiction included Pakistan and India). He asked me whether I was sitting down and I assured him that I was. He told me that he had just been asked to go to Pakistan. I could hardly absorb it! Shultz returned to Washington soon thereafter and prepared to fly to Pakistan to bring the bodies home and Bob was told to be on board with enough clothing so that he could stay for an extended period; he was going to be appointed ambassador. There was considerable concern, for Nancy Ely Raphel, Arnie's widow, who had been a Department official, starting in the Legal Advisor's Office and who then had worked on African matters. She was also greatly admired and respected and everyone was terribly concerned for her well being.

So Bob went to Islamabad and I stayed in Washington, working in Public Affairs. It was Chuck Redman who accompanied the secretary on his trip to Pakistan. I must say that I was somewhat peeved by that; I would have liked to have gone on that trip. Throughout that fall's presidential campaign, people thought that Bush would be elected, but one couldn't be sure. If Bush won, who would be Secretary of State? Would Bob be asked to stay in Pakistan? There were a lot of questions. So this was a period of great uncertainty about the future administration and Bob's and my role in it. Bob and I had decided that we had spent so much time apart that we were not going to be separated again. So we had to make certain assumptions; we assumed that Bush would win the presidency, that Baker would be Secretary of State, and that Bob would be requested to remain iPakistan as ambassador.

So I did not bid for a new assignment. By the end of January, Shultz was gone as was Chuck Redman. He was succeeded by Margaret Tutwiler, whom I mentioned earlier. I helped her in the transition and then I had to have a hysterectomy. Bob came back for the operation and some of the recovery period. After a bit of recuperation, renting the house, and packing up, I moved to Islamabad to join him in February, 1989. I happened to fly out on the same plane as Senator Pat Moynihan, who was on his way to visit the area, including a stop in Islamabad. It was one of those flights on which you knew every other passenger - first on the flight to London and then on Pakistani Airlines to Islamabad. I had gone out to Pakistan in the fall to see Bob once; he had left Washington in August but had returned briefly for Senate confirmation hearings, and said that he really wanted me to come out even if it was for a few days to attend the Marine Ball that is held on November 10. USIA was willing to send me to Europe for a speaking tour, talking about the role of a spokesperson and U.S. policy in general. So I went to London to meet with a number of British officials and journalists and on to Italy to discuss the same issues. From Rome I flew to Pakistan, where I traveled throughout the country for about a week, giving USIA- sponsored presentations on the role of the American press in foreign policy, how the Department and the press interacted, and the role of the press in a democratic society. That was very interesting experience because it was at the time Pakistan was preparing for an electio- thanks in large part to Bob's prodding and pushing for a free and democratic election after Zia's death. Benazir Bhutto was elected. She was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's daughter and she and her father were well known to the U.S. She was Pakistan's first female president. So the Pakistanis were excited by their experience with democracy. They felt they finally had got rid of military authoritarian governments. It was also the time when the Soviets promised to leave Afghanistan. This arrangement, worked out by George Shultz and Gorbachev, was covered fully by Don Oberdorfer in his wonderful book of diplomatic history called "The Turn."

So I went to Islamabad. I did not have a job and I wasn't really interested in working in the embassy - where there were no positions available at the time in any case. But USAID was just beginning to implement its programs that had been developed to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. As the Soviets retreated, a temporary government was being set up in Peshawar, Pakistan, led by the seven resistance leaders. Efforts were made to give each of the seven confidence that they could work with the other six. So there was considerable activity about setting up an Afghan Interim Government, some of it visible and some of it under the surface, in part relating to Saudi Arabian assistance to fundamentalist groups. The conventional wisdom was that the government of Najubullah in Kabul - seen by some as a Soviet puppet - would fall soon after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, to be succeeded by the mujahadeen leaders who would then establish a more permanent governmental structure among themselves.

Conventional wisdom was wrong. Najubullah did not fall; he was an able Afghan supported by a civil service structure that the Soviets had created. Women had a certain amount of freedom, which was unusual, in a very conservative society. They were professionals - doctors, teachers, judges. There were a lot of Afghans afraid of the conservative mujahadeen leaders, afraid of those who seemed determined to set up a conservative government and a society that adhered to their fundamentalist views. Tribal and regional leaders would become important once again and women would be severely restricted in their lives. So there were a lot of Afghans who did not relish those prospects and therefore continued to support Najubullah.

The AID Afghanistan Humanitarian Assistance program had been developed when Soviet pressure in 1988-89 on eastern Afghan provinces made it appear that the mujahadeen might be subjected to such hardships that they could not continue as a viable force operating there, next to their bases in Pakistan. So the assistance program was designed to help the people remaining in the eastern provinces and to try to prevent them from fleeing into Pakistan which already had the world's largest refugee population. These refugees lived in camps supported by the UNHRC. The AID program included projects for education, health care, and agriculture. Logistic services were developed to deliver the material into Afghanistan. I should note that no American was allowed to enter Afghanistan; we established collection and training stations in and around Peshawar and the Afghans took it from there. There were NGOs - e.g. Mercy Corps, the Red Cross, and the International Rescue Committee - who did work in Afghanistan, supposedly without Americans. The ICRC, for example, had established several hospitals inside Afghanistan and in Pakistan - one of which I had visited earlier in 1983.

I thought that working for USAID in Islamabad would be a natural for me. It involved issues with which I was familiar - I knew the Afghan political scene and I knew congressional views. After the Soviet departure from Afghanistan, we continued to provide support to the mujahadeen who were still expected to take over the government once Najubullah fell. We tried to help them get organized into ministries. But in one sense we didn't give them resources to govern, and old patterns of military assistance continued.

Q: In retrospect, we might say we concentrated on getting the Soviets out of Afghanistan and not Najubullah. He was succeeded in some respects by worse.

OAKLEY: I think as time went by it became clearer that Najubullah was a smart leader who had the support of a large number of Afghans. In retrospect, I think we should probably have tried to make a deal with him. It may not have been possible in the early 1990s because the Afghan leaders in Pakistan would have objected strenuously. The strongest military leader of this group was Gulbaddin Hekmatyar who was very conservative and somewhat anti-American. There was Ahmad Shah Masoud, Lion of the Panjshu Valley, a leader in northern Afghanistan where the Tajiks and the Uzbeks lived. There was a fellow by the name of Pir Gailani, who was a Pushtun hereditary nobleman and very westernized; he didn't have much support. There was a leader by the name of Mojeddedi, with whom I had dealt often; he was probably the most westernized mujahadeen leader. He had a son who was a doctor in the U.S. The major problem was that these leaders, because of tribal, social, and religious differences, just couldn't get their act together; they could not find any common ground; they were constantly working against each other. As I said before, I have always felt that in most guerrilla-rebel situations there was some chief who eventually took control. For example, you had Tito in Yugoslavia and Ben Bella in Algeria. In most uprisings, one leader emerged to take over the leadership however ruthlessly. For many reasons, principally for control purposes, the Pakistanis had developed a divide-and-conquer policy or didn't change it. Therefore these various factions were inhibited from uniting. The attitude of enmity was so ingrained that the rebel leadership just couldn't get together. The Pakistanis seemed to back Hekmatyar; others resented that support.

I can't say that I ever understood completely the politics of the situation as so much was handled by CIA and ISS of Pakistan. There were accusations that our assistance favored Hekmatyar. The response was that he was the most effective fighter and therefore merited major support. When AID hired me, I became responsible for working with the "interim" government in Peshawar to help them set up a public affairs and public relations program, including newsletters to inform the public about the interim government's efforts. I also worked on the narcotic program, with which we hoped to start some kind of crop suppression or substitution effort. Poppy production was not nearly as large as it is today, but it still was much too high.

In the beginning, among the AID staff, I felt there was considerable resentment of me. That didn't apply to Larry Crandall, the mission chief, who was very imaginative and had in fact developed the program on which I was to work. I liked him a lot; we worked well together. He saw the political requirements of having some one work with this new government to help bring things together. I really wasn't qualified to be an education consultant or a public health worker or any other highly specialized technician, but I could do what Larry had outlined. In the second and third echelons of this AID mission, there was a lot of resentment. People were concerned about perceived nepotism. I think everyone acknowledged that I might know more about Afghan politics than anyone else in the mission, but there was the feeling that as the ambassador's wife, I was being foisted on them. I saw it as just another experience in an area of change for spouses that I had gone through before in Zaire. One just had to ignore the resentments and do the job as best one could. Eventually, I think I overcame much of the resentment. Even the deputy mission director, who eventually admitted that he had opposed my appointment and that he had not thought that I would be a useful addition to the staff, said that he had been wrong and he thought that I had made a worthwhile contribution. I was careful to always be in the office on time; I was usually among the last to leave because I just could walk home within the Embassy compound.

I spent a lot of time in Peshawar working with groups like the Afghan Media Resource Center, which was headed by Haji Dahoud. He also worked closely with USIA on programs intended to encourage eventual democratic Afghan government. I think that a lot of good came out of these projects, some of which we may be seeing now. The AID program was not designed to help Afghans who lived in Pakistan. It was directed toward the delivery of services and goods into Afghanistan, particularly the east. For example, previous Afghan governments had had educational links with the University of Nebraska - they were again hired to send out a lot of experts on text book development for elementary grades, printing them (on Xerox machines) and distributing them all over the country. The basic themes of these textbooks were Afghan, but they had an overlay of American educational theory. Those were the only textbooks available to the children; in many places, AID clinics were the only health facilities for a wide area. So much of the country relied completely on U.S. assistance.

I later headed - from 1993-1997 - the bureau that handled refugee affairs and was glad to have worked with a woman named Marissa Lino, who was the refugee coordinator in Pakistan. She was responsible for coordinating our tremendous assistance through the UNHCR for Afghan refugees. So we had a lot of programs to support the Afghans, and they had to be closely coordinated within the embassy in an effort to develop and follow a coherent U.S. position on Afghanistan. I was working with the CIA also, of course.

Q: Talk a little if you will about what changes were taking in the American psyche out in the area as we moved from supporting a rebellion to trying to put a government together?

OAKLEY: As I said, Pakistani policy had been to keep control of the divided Afghan leadership and we went along with it - we couldn't change it and our object was to inflict damage on the Soviets. When the Soviets left, Pakistan reverted to traditional views on Afghanistan; it was extremely concerned about the revival of the movement which had supported an independent Pashtunistan that would have incorporated large parts of the North-West Frontier Provinces and the eastern part of Afghanistan, also populated by Pushtun tribes. The Pakistanis did not want this to happen. The Pakistan grand strategy was always to have Afghanistan closely allied to it if not under its control, in order to achieve "strategic depth" in its continued rivalry with India. A lot of people would say today, given modern weapons including nuclear ones, the concept of "strategic depth" has long outlived its usefulness. It is like the Golan Heights on Israel's borders - what appeared to be a strategic requirement some years ago has been made obsolete by modern military capabilities.

I think that there were games being played and activities that we didn't pay enough attention to. When we look now at the activities of certain Arabs who were sent on jihad, sometimes to Afghanistan just to get them out of their own countries (especially from Saudi Arabia, where they were perceived to be a danger to the regime), we can see that they were more dangerous than we had thought. So the whole picture was quite muddled. The problems created by the Afghan leaders didn't help. The "seven dwarfs," as some people called them, simply could not come together and agree to form a unity government. And the United States simply wasn't very interested politically after the Soviets left. We did walk away.

I have given this era considerable thought; I didn't, and don't, have access to CIA secret operations and therefore can not have a complete picture. I have some suspicions about the Agency's activities, but no documentary evidence. Nevertheless, I think we might have played our cards on the Afghan issue differently and might have thereby had a chance to build something in Afghanistan that might not have been subject to the stresses and divisions that it subsequently had to face. I admit that nothing was ever sure in Afghanistan. The conventional wisdom fell short, that Najubullah would fall quickly and the mujahadeen would easily take over.

Q: One of the criticisms of the Afghan leaders that I have heard was that they sat in Pakistan far behind the fighting and were not with their men, not to mention leading their men.

OAKLEY: I think that Hekmatyar actually did lead his fighters. Some of the others - Sayyaf, Mojeddedi, Gailani - were older and were not expected to lead the charge. In any case, these were political and not military leaders. I think the early decision to support all seven leaders and not to coalesce behind one overall leader was erroneous. I understand the motivation; Pakistan and the U.S. in the early 1980s felt that if a single leader were chosen - or forced on the others - the whole resistance movement might well have collapsed. Furthermore, there was a theory that a diverse opposition with multiple leaders would be much harder for the Soviets to defeat.

I think we need to recognize that the Afghan leadership issue is a very complicated one, with any number of writers who have tried to tackle it. There was a UN negotiating process underway during the late 1980s, led by Diego Cordovez of the UN. So there had been some prospect for resolution of the disputes between the Soviets, the Afghan government, the Afghan resistance, the U.S. and the Pakistanis. In the end, some aspects of the UN plan were adopted, but it did not become a complete peace plan.

I should mention that another difficulty in resolving the Afghan situation was that we were not talking to the Iranians, who had objectives of their own. They were housing lots of Afghan refugees; those refugees, although also supported by the UNHRC, were in a different situation from those in Pakistan. In recent times, we began to meet alongside if not with Iranians, and central Asian leaders as well as Pakistanis on the future of Afghanistan, because it was clear that fighting continued even after Soviet withdrawal because of outside support.

Without going into a full discussion of Afghanistan's most recent history, there are a couple of important issues that I would like to mention. Everyone thinks that the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan was the zenith of the USSR's empire. When they retreated, it was very much like the U.S. getting out of Vietnam - they decided that the cost-benefit ratio did not support further occupation of Afghanistan. We really did not defeat them or force them out - they made the decision.

It has been a very sad period for the Afghans; they were a very traditional society, as I have mentioned, but not intolerant. Many foreigners who lived in Afghanistan, working for governmental or non-governmental organizations, loved Afghanistan and its people. They have the most wonderful faces in the world. They are tall and dignified and attractive - and ferocious. In my AID job, I had to go to Peshawar almost once each week to meet with various leaders, to check on projects, and to confer with the Afghan Media Center. The first challenge was always how to get there. If you flew, it was on a very small plane that shook and shuddered; driving took three hours on some difficult stretches - two lanes with buses, trucks, and carts. We would cross the Indus River guarded by old frontier forts. Peshawar was fascinating, like Aleppo. It was very cold in the winter and men sat in storefronts eating, drinking tea. There were a few stores that dealt in antiquities - early Iranian, early Mogul. Then there were the rug bazaars and dealers in the old sections of town. It was a world so far removed from ours that one felt on another planet. It was an absolutely fascinating city.

I often stayed with the American counsel, Jerry Fierstein, who was an old friend - he had worked on the Pakistan desk when I was working on the Afghanistan desk. He was in the tradition of many good officers who had been assigned as consul to Peshawar; it was such a key spot in Pakistan. There were a lot of other Americans there; it was the headquarters for all of the relief agencies. There was an American Club of some notoriety; it had dining and recreational facilities and a bar. For a lot of the Americans, this was their only refuge on their days off. There would be parties on Valentine's Day, Halloween, etc. - rather wild, I was told. Once they held a California beach party; people came with "surf" boards - actually ironing boards - they held a wet tee-shirt contesall good college fun. Young people needed to blow off steam - after a session at the Club, they would return to teaching English, managing computer programs, writing reports, and working in medical clinics. The Club was their refuge.

The Pakistani governor was an important figure in the Northwest Frontier Province because he ran the government - in the areas that were governable. He was usually a retired military man who thus had close connections to the army. There were some areas beyond Pakistani control, where Afghan rebels trained. Peshawar was always a fountain of information on what was going on in Afghanistan.

Once I came across a very interesting report on poppy production written by an aid worker, who had gone into the Helmund Valley, where in the 1970s the U.S. had provided lots of assistance for a huge irrigation and hydroelectric power project. The area became very fertile for cotton - and poppies - and the worker reported on the current valley leadership that he had found. I took the report and distilled it into a long cable back to Washington, also reporting on what we were planning to work out a deal with him. One day in Islamabad, the old Helmund Valley Afghan leader, Mullah Nassem, asked to see Bob. I sat in on the meeting, along with several others including the DEA representative. Mullah Nassem was willing to make a deal with us: if we were willing to provide a certain amount of assistance to resume power generation, he would see to it that poppy cultivation would cease. He also wanted irrigation ditches and power lines rebuilt in his province; he didn't have the resources to do it on his own. After discussing the proposal among ourselves, we were prepared to accept it, which I think could have had a substantial impact on reducing poppy cultivation in that area of Afghanistan. We cabled Washington again with our plan. But Washington sent a blistering cable back, instructing us to cut off any further dealing with this leader. We were told that our plan was not acceptable and could be in violation of law, which prohibited any assistance being provided to a known narcotics trafficker. The Washington guidance left us speechless because it was so self-defeating. We wanted to know why we hadn't heard anything in response to our first telegram on the situation.

The answer was obviously that someone in Washington had not been paying attention when he or she should have been. Unfortunately, in light of the silence from headquarters, the embassy had more or less given indications of being agreeable to the proposition. In fact, all the planning was proceeding well when Washington pulled the plug. I have always felt that Washington made a great mistake, or maybe we did by telling them. I think we could have done a great deal to nip the expanding production of heroin at that time if we had been willing to provide assistance so Afghans could have grown alternative crops. When the Taliban came to power in the 1990s, I don't think they used poppy production as a policy tool and later banned it. Nevertheless, there was expanding heroin processing in Pakistan, with production going to Europe. These revenues helped finance a lot of the continued fighting in the 1990s - but also kept farmers alive.

Later, that old Afghan leader was assassinated in one of the tribal wars, so that we didn't have to face his wrath - which in my view was entirely justified in light of our first meeting with him. This episode, I think, is an interesting sidelight to the Afghan picture of the last fifteen years.

When I first went to Peshawar in 1983 - I was then the Afghan desk officer and out for a familiarization trip visiting the refugee camps - my overwhelming memory was of dust. I still can see the long lines of Afghan men walking from the camps into the city, to the relief agencies, or Pakistani government offices, one after another all day long. The sides of the roads were always packed and there were not many cars. It was a drab and somewhat depressing picture.

By the time I returned in 1989, Peshawar was "Pajero-land." I didn't see as many people walking and the refugees by this time had acquired other means of transportation - trucks, vans, Pajeros, or other SUVs - it was a complete change from just six years earlier.

In spite of early resentment against me, I ended up enjoying my tour with AID. I learned a great deal about how that agency works - such things as the programming system, and the contracting system. I had to go to a two-week course in Lahore devoted to learning how projects are developed and managed. I came away from that session with the feeling that AID is so encrusted with bureaucratic barnacles - mostly imposed by Congresthat require that every step of the process be fully documented and traceable - that the agency had become an almost ineffective operation. It took so long to set up the projects and implement them that they often lost their effectiveness; I admit that there were often large sums of money involveIn contrast, when I worked in USIA, where the amount of money was much less, there was an operational flexibility that allowed projects to be developed and executed very quickly. There were procedures, but they did not interfere with prompt response to whatever the need or the opportunity required. In AID's case, if there was a long range development plan that had been approved by all concerned, then projects within that plan could be approved rather easily. But new initiatives were very difficult to mount. It took people like Larry Crandall, with his Afghan humanitarian program, to figure out how to work the system so that emergency requirements could be met promptly. He was a genius when it came to that; others didn't have that same ability.

His plan was the most innovative one that I have ever seen. As I said, it encompassed education, public health, and agriculture. He found a couple of former Afghan agriculture ministers to work on orchards, getting people fertilizers, and assistance with irrigation to get fruit trees growing again. Crandall set up an Afghan trucking company so that the supplies for all of the projects were delivered on time and economically.

Q: Was Afghanistan in the late 1980s still in a war time situation or had the country returned to more or less peacetime?

OAKLEY: There was no question that the level of fighting that had taken place during the Soviet occupation had abated. But fighting continued, particularly in the east, and the situation was still very dangerous. American officials were not allowed to travel into the country. Individual Americans - e.g. journalists and some NGOs - went in, but they were few.

The infrastructure had crumbled after ten years. In the Afghan climate, with its extreme heat and cold, it is hard to maintain construction - roads, buildings - without constant maintenance. I am deeply moved by all the reports filtering out now from Afghanistan about children dying of starvation and cold. The country has had a terrible drought for some time, food supplies are low, the Taliban is making a mess of governance, foreign entities are reluctant to provide assistance because of the nature of the Taliban's policies, and as I said, fighting continues. The situation in Afghanistan is a real challenge for American non-governmental aid agencies. They want to help the people, but are reluctant to do so in light of the Taliban's treatment of women. Everyone is in a bind.

Q: How did you as a woman find dealing with the seven Afghan leaders?

OAKLEY: Some would not shake my hand. They could not bring themselves to touch a woman. I tried to remember which leader would and which wouldn't. Here and in Pakistan, of course, everyone sticks out their hands as a way to say hello, as a greeting. There I tried to curb that instinct. If they wanted to shake hands, they would have to initiate the process and I would respond. I wondered what power a 55 year-old woman could have that would impede some of these leaders from shaking my hand! It was, of course, tradition that stood in the way. Some of the younger American AID workers would become quite annoyed at the Afghan treatment of womedemanding the covering of heads, arms, and legs, if not the burqa. They wanted me to go with them because they thought that I added a certain amount of presence and gravitas and if I didn't cover my arms in summer they wouldn't have to either. But I tried to be on the conservative side and not create an issue. I had no trouble dealing with Afghans, frankly. They had known me from earlier incarnations and I was the wife of the American ambassador; and I was well informed and serious about what I was doing. It was a job entirely different from what I was used to; this was essentially field work - going out and seeing and evaluating the situation "on the ground." I made a lot of good friends and I really enjoyed this aspect of the job.

My duties as wife of the ambassador were relatively easy. The residence was wonderful - it had been built in the late 1970s. It was very modern in a very dramatic setting overlooking the Margala Hills. It was in a compound that had tennis courts, a swimming pool, a commissary, medical services, and apartments for American personnel. I had traditionally opposed American compounds because they tended to separate Americans from the local community, but for a lot of the young embassy people it was an appropriate facility in a Muslim country. You could see young women driving into the compound with white knuckles because they had been subjected to so many rude remarks and sexual gestures by Pakistanis. Whenever a truck driver - and others - saw a western woman, it was an opportunity to behave inappropriately, to our western eyes. So when these young people entered the compound, they could get into their jogging clothes and run free, swim and sun bathe, play tennis and behave as they would in the States. The compound was a refuge from the hostile and difficult atmosphere of the streets.

I should mention that I had a very good household staff that made my job much easier. These were "bearers" or butlers who carried on the old colonial traditions - they wore turbaned hats and took great pride in their profession. We had a very nice cook who had a red beard - he was a Haji. He and I would work out menus and recipes. It seemed to me that we spent a lot of time worrying about food, which in fact was dwarfed by the many larger social problemsuch as refugees and poverty. We had a lot of small social occasions - lunches or dinners. Several congressional delegations, or CODELs, came and then we would have large receptions. One of the delegations was made up entirely of congresswomen, while Benazir Bhutto was the Prime Minister. They wanted to show their support for her. There were a lot of people interested in various aspects of Pakistan and Afghanistan; so we had quite a few CODELs. Senators Pell, Spector, Shelby, and Cranston were among the visitors.

We had taken our yellow Labrador dog with us, named Swinburne. He found several mates in Islamabad and had lots of offspring. We had two litters of puppies at the residence. I remember Senator Cranston sitting in our beautiful garden, designed by an American/Australian professional with long experience in Pakistan thanks to the encouragement of a much earlier Ambassador, Art Hummel, playing with puppies. He loved them.

On weekends, I would play tennis once or twice. We had our own pool that I also used on the weekend. There were not many social demands on me during the day. Everyone in the diplomatic and Pakistan communities knew that I worked and I was the envy of a lot of the diplomatic wives because without a job, life in Islamabad was very quiet. If I had an official lunch that took longer than normal, I would stay at the office a little longer in the evening. So it was really a very nice existence. There was a lot of serious talk at the dinner or lunch table. Benazir Bhutto and her husband would come quite often for small dinners; Bob would be off talking with her and various guests and I would spend hours with Bhutto's husband, Asef. He would speak of how much he had given up so that his wife could be Prime Minister and how restrained he had to be in his position. He was a "bubblehead!" They boarded their dog, a yellow Lab named Sunny, with us for a while when they were moving into their residence. He was the "lightest" person I have ever met; he had no concept of what it meant to serve Pakistan or to help his wife serve the country. He was always consumed with his own "problems."

Q: Wasn't he charged with taking bribery?

OAKLEY: Yes. After her second reelection, the Bhuttos went wild with corruption by all reports. They were somewhat corrupt, or at least he was, while we were there. A lot of Pakistanis complained to us about what she and her husband were doing. Benazir and Asef were accused of taking a healthy cut of the government's procurement expenditures as kickbacks. The share was considered to be beyond the limit in South Asia. I have always said that it is very hard to understand the limits of corruption - what is acceptable or when it is over the limit - in another country. Europeans never understood Nixon and his impeachment; our rationales were beyond their understanding and the practices in their countries. So I didn't know when "corruption" in Pakistan or other foreign countries went too far and what was acceptable practice. But clearly the Bhuttos exceeded the norms.

Q: What was your impression of Bhutto as a Prime Minister?

OAKLEY: I think she was a disappointment. She had a wonderful academic background - Harvard and Oxford. As head of the Pakistan's People Party, she would say all the right things about democracy and the rights of people, and it is true that she had to contend with traditional power centers - e.g. the landowners - and therefore had a difficult row to hoe, but she was simply not as effective as one would have hoped. She just wanted to retain power. In the end, President Khan dismissed her - an entirely legal act under the Pakistani constitution. That forced another election, which brought Nawaz Sharif to power. He came in also with great hopes. Everybody thought he would be more effective than his predecessor but in the end, he too fell. After we had departed, Bhutto was reelected to her second term and the charges of corruption grew and grew, accompanied by a general feeling of dissatisfaction with her regime. She was followed by Sharif again; he was finally ousted in a military coup by General Musharraf.

Q: How long were you in Pakistan?

OAKLEY: I was there from the beginning of 1989 to mid-1991. By spring of 1991, we knew that Bob's three year tour was coming to a close and I began to look for an assignment in Washington and I was offered several positions. Then Peter Burleigh called one day asking me to become a deputy in INR. That was more than I had expected; I thought it was just a terrific offer. I didn't know too much about the "intelligence" aspect of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research; what I knew I had learned on the Afghan desk and by watching the CIA work in Pakistan and other posts.

Our daughter was married in the summer of 1989 and was expecting a child in 1991. I had arranged her wedding from Pakistan; it was wonderful but not the smoothest operation imaginable because we didn't have a base for such an event back in the States and we only got home a week before. So there were several reasons why I wanted to stay in the U.S. for a while; I had done my bit for AID. I think I was helpful to the Afghanistan operation, especially in explaining to CODELs what we were doing for Afghanistan to improve governance and unity and how the Afghan Interim Government could operate. I specifically remember Senator Gordon Humphrey's (R-NH) visit; he was a leading hawk on Afghanistan. I think it was very hard for him and for everyone to understand why the Afghan Interim Government couldn't get moving. They, of course, would point to the lack of resources - e.g. we hadn't given them enough money. We would point out that we had not seen sufficient evidence that they could manage those resources to good effect. For example, there had been an earthquake in eastern Afghanistan. We thought that would at least bring the seven leaders together so that a certain amount of assistance could be cooperatively distributed to all the victims. Well, I went to Peshawar and attended meeting after meeting, which went on interminably. They (the seven leaders) wouldn't accept anybody else's suggestions; all they wanted was that the resources be allocated to each leader individually, and they promised to distribute them fairly to their people but without any reference to others. Their positions and attitudes were enough to make one pull one's hair.

Q: Was there a second layer of command among the Afghan interim regime that might have been more responsive?

OAKLEY: In a way, yes. The largest number of refugees who left Afghanistan during the war went to Germany, followed by the U.S. and a few other places. Generally, these people were bright, educated, modern individuals who had had the advantage of various educational programs as well as close contact with the West. But when they returned, they were submerged in traditional leadership and unable to operate. In retrospect, this group of young well-educated people would have been far better off working for Najubullah. They would have been able to make a far more important contribution at that time to Afghanistan's development.

Q: Was our policy toward Najubullah ever challenged or reviewed?

OAKLEY: Not seriously because the consensus or conventional wisdom was that he would not be able to hang on. During 1990 and 1991, it was thought that he could not last much longer and that the interim government would eventually come to power in Kabul. It was wishful thinking, in retrospect. But at the time, it seemed quite reasonable and our views were encouraged by the Pakistanis, who I think may well have been playing a double game. It suited them in some ways to keep the Afghan situation unsettled. It kept the Pashtunistan threat at bay, as well as other things. I wish now that we had done things differently. I am not sure that even had we done so, it would have had a major impact on subsequent events. Sometime, we overestimate our power of influence. In the final analysis, the future of Afghanistan had to be determined by its people and not outside powers.

A lot of non-governmental organizations got started or expanded in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion. The Vietnamese situation had first stimulated interest in refugees; that was followed by the Afghan problems. From the mid-1970s, the U.S. government developed a Refugee Resettlement Program, which allowed us to admit to the U.S. certain refugee categories - generally with ties to the U.S. such as former political leaders or government officials. It made us feel good and gave those refugees a safe haven. Unnoticed - or at least not discussed - was another impact of that program. It, in fact, removed from Afghanistan a whole class of modern, educated Afghans. If they had stayed in the area and agitated for a competent government, that might have changed the course of history. Of course I can't blame the refugees, because of their own safety and that of their families it would have been very difficult for them to reject offers of safe haven in the U.S. or in Europe. Even if their lives were not in danger, they had no jobs in Afghanistan and therefore their economic prospects were far better in the West. But their departure left such a void in the leadership class that it undoubtedly had an impact on the course of history. One could say we did the same thing in Vietnam to a certain extent. For short-term, valid reasons, actions were taken which may have contributed to authoritarian regimes and unwelcome political situations.

Q: Were the Iranians players in the Afghan situation in this time?

OAKLEY: No; at least as far as we knew. In the 1980s they had other fish to fry - the Iraqis. They did not seem particularly interested in trying to dominate their eastern flank. The Shia-Sunni split of course was ongoing. The Afghan Shia were concentrated in the central mountainous part of Afghanistan; the Iranians were interested in that part of Afghanistan, but couldn't reach it easily. Sunnis lived closer to the Iranian border.

Q: How did "Desert Storm" play out in Pakistan?

OAKLEY: That was very interesting, because Pakistan had for sometime enjoyed a certain amount of free oil from Kuwait. Kuwait had also been very active in assisting Afghan refugees. They had a very able ambassador in Pakistan and at the beginning of the conflict, Pakistan gave full support to the U.S. and Kuwait. When the Gulf War began, USIA sponsored various programs to discuss what was happening in the Middle East and to test Pakistani attitudes. It became clear that these attitudes were changing. From initial support, Pakistan moved to growing opposition to what America was doing in Kuwait and Iraq. In looking back, I think a lot of this change was due to agitation by the traditionalists or fundamentalists - Arab conservatives who were aghast by the American presence in "their" part of the world, particularly Saudi Arabia. Also, a lot of Pakistanis had access to CNN; what they saw on that network provided considerable fodder for conversation. In the early days of the Gulf War, CNN focused on Israel and the threat that Iraq posed for that country - i.e., the missiles. It was the only part of the Middle East to which CNN had ready access. But the coverage gave the impression to a lot of CNN's Muslim viewers that all the U.S. cared about was the protection of Israel. It never occurred to me that this coverage would have such a negative effect in Pakistan. Then there was repeated TV coverage of the amazing American military power. Pakistan became a somewhat inhospitable place for Americans; we had an evacuation even though one would have thought that when we came to Kuwait's rescue - a close Pakistani friend - it would have been to our benefit. There were no links between Pakistan and Iraq. Yet it became clear even before the serious bombardment of Iraq started that we should evacuate dependants and employees who were not deemed essential. The American School was closed and most people left. I stayed on with the AID skeleton staff; we virtually ceased operations and we didn't go to Peshawar. In fact, we didn't leave the compound until passions had cooled. I was willing to be evacuated; I thought that this was what the decision-makers wanted and I was not about to fight it. But some told me that I had to stay if no other reason than to keep my husband under control! I was happy to do so.

Q: Of course, in light of our previous experiences in Tehran and Islamabad, the powers-that-be didn't want to run the risk of any Americans being killed anywhere in the area.

OAKLEY: Absolutely, but I think it may have been an overreaction. But I did witness demonstrations in Rawalpindi and Lahore and one could see in people's eyes a wild irrationality. There was no way to predict how events would turn out. One day, while running an errand in Rawalpindi with Bob's driver - I was discouraged from driving myself because of the risks involved - I saw a mob gathering. The driver said it was time to go home - pronto. My initial reaction was to just drive around the scene; I thought we could bypass the problem and I could finish my errands. But my better judgement rose to the fore and I concluded that the driver was right and we hit the trail home.

Within the first few weeks of my arrival in Pakistan, there had been a riot in front of the American Cultural Center on the main street in Islamabad. This was the result of the publication of Suleiman Rushdie's book and the reaction to it by fundamentalists. The U.S. was really not involved, as it had been published in the United Kingdom, but nevertheless we became the target and our staff people were surrounded in the Cultural Center. Fortunately, the mob did not close enough to the Center to do real damage, but there were a number of Pakistanis killed in the melee. So there had been just enough anti-American incidents to put everyone on edge during the Gulf War.

Q: Were you noticing the growth of a fundamentalist movement in Pakistan?

OAKLEY: Yes, but it was only in its beginning period and nothing compared to what it became later. I think fundamentalism grew throughout the Arab world. I think developments in Afghanistan were an important motivating factor, with the growth of the Taliban, in part spawned by the madrasas in Pakistan. It was the failure of the Pakistani government to deliver social services to the Pakistani public - education, public health, transportation, etc. - year after year that certainly played a large role in the expansion of fundamentalism, since people turned to those who provided. The Pakistani government, of course, was always concerned about India and therefore devoted large resources to its military capabilities, which it couldn't afford. Most governments were also tied to traditional pro-large-landlord policies - such as low taxes and no redistribution of land.

Q: What was your impression about Pakistan's view of India as expressed to you by your Pakistani contacts?

OAKLEY: In my view, most Pakistani views on India were irrational. We knew a lot of people, of course, who had suffered in partition when their parents had been forced out of various Indian provinces and areas. In addition, we knew people who had been brought up in Bangladesh and who were bitter because they had not been well treated by the Pakistani government. But almost all of our contacts were irrational about India, I felt. That was particularly true for Pakistanis in the military who were obsessed with India; India was not obsessed with Pakistan.

At one transitional point, Pakistan was led by Moen Qereshi, a former World Bank official who made a real effort to reduce corruption and provide good management. In his interim period, he did a lot of good work in collecting on old loans for the government and reallocating resources from the military to the social sector.

So it could be done. By the time I left Pakistan, my greatest concern was that population growth was going to overwhelm any possible economic growth - all the statistics showed birth rates outstripping any increases in social services. When Pakistan was created in 1947, it had 33 million people. By 1989, it was over 100 million. Worst of all, investment in social services and infrastructure - roads, power, schools, hospitals, etc. - had not nearly kept up with this population explosion. It was out of control. The growth of fundamentalism made it more difficult to deal with social problems, because of opposition from certain mullahs, not to mention the reluctance of the government to make needed investments. Any investments in the social sector had to come from outside. It was not an effective national system.

Q: Did our assistance program have some inhibitions about population programs?

OAKLEY: For Afghanistan, the emphasis was on helping women with maternal health and safe deliveries. Because of the Afghan war, many people had died or had left the country that there didn't seem to be the same kind of population pressure. In addition, the conditions in Afghanistan, even in the best of times, were harsh. It was and is one of the poorest countries in the world. So family planning was not a priority in the Afghan program, but when some of us walked through those refugee camps, we noticed hordes of little children and we became concerned. I think we could have done a great deal more about family planning for Afghans. I met many people later, when I was working on population, refugee, and migration issues (I became much more knowledgeable and interested in the issue), who pointed out to me the results of our failure to mount a population program for Afghans. But in the late 1980s, it was not as much of a concern; the view of most Afghans and Pakistanis was quite fatalistic - "Allah will provide." But there is no question that an Afghan family planning program would have been useful; the demand was there. We had other priorities.

Q: Was there a certain amount of frustration among embassy and AID people that we were not doing enough about this problem?

OAKLEY: As I've said, there had been quite a good family planning program in Pakistan. It was not a question of changing views - it was simply meeting demand for contraception at the basic level. In a society like Pakistan, abortion is not a subject for discussion. The essence of a good family planning program is contraception; various methods must be taught and the means provided. It includes even such things as explaining reproduction to teenage girls, whose education is the key to later marriages and less reproduction. There were so many areas of reproductive health and population growth that needed to be dealt with - abortion was really at the end of the line and did not need attention, although I'm sure it went on.

But as I said, I left feeling that Pakistan was a population time bomb.

Q: You returned from Pakistan in 1991 and went to work for INR.

OAKLEY: Right. I was one of four deputies, and responsible for regional analysis or the geographic offices. The offices of INR organized along geographic lines - following the regional bureaus - reported to me. As I mentioned before, I had never worked with intelligence and therefore had a steep learning curve in order to understand how the process operated, particularly daily production of the intelligence summary for the secretary and other senior officials, called the Secretary's Morning Summary [SMS], and the National Intelligence Daily [NID], the CIA's daily publication. So I had to delve into a whole new world.

I had a lot of experience in Africa and the Middle East; not very much in South America or East Asia. I thought the job was fascinating. I met a whole new cast of characters - NSA, CIA, DIA, NRO. It highlighted for me how wonderful Foreign Service work is. It is a career which gives one the opportunity for a very wide range of experience - in my case, from Afghan desk officer to congressional affairs to spokesperson to Pakistan and then to the intelligence world. It was very interesting, even with the very long hours required. I would have to go to work both Saturday and Sunday every other weekend - we called it "setting the book on Saturday and Sunday" - or giving final approval to the SMS.

Q: What was your impression of the information that was flowing through your office?

OAKLEY: In 1991, Jim Baker was the secretary. He had brought Douglas Mulholland in to head INR, whom he had known before at Treasury. Doug had worked at CIA, had transferred to Treasury when Baker was Secretary there and handled intelligence matters for him. I think Jim appointed Mulholland because he knew him. Baker was not very interested in intelligence collection and analysis as far as I could see.

Mulholland had a very personal relationship with the Secretary, taking sensitive materials up to him personally. He ran the office in a highly compartmentalized manner and I did not get far beyond my immediate responsibilities. I was doing broad regional analysis; we had a lot of meetings and weekly briefings with the British, Canadians, and Australians. The amount of information that flowed in seemed never ending and incredible to me but what I dealt with was not very sensitive. Phil Wilcox was the senior deputy. I didn't have much contact with the seventh floor and there were highly classified materials, particularly on sources and methods, to which I did not have access.

The job was largely editing and managerial. I did not write papers or memoranda but directed and called for their production, massaging and editing what was sent up to me, slowly getting better, I think. Doug was a real stickler for brevity. He would cut out whole paragraphs and did not allow extraneous material or background to be included in papers. I enjoyed my tour because I had access to so much information and because I met so many fine people, not only on our staff, but from other agencies and foreign counterparts both in Washington or in their own countries.

There was one thing that I didn't like about the job. I thought it was mainly process, very much like the spokesperson's job - information in, information ouOne did not have the sense of accomplishment that I had felt working on the Afghan desk or for AID. There was no opportunity for initiative, creativity, or developing and selling a policy approach. In operational jobs, you can take an idea, push it through, and then see the results of your efforts. That didn't happen in INR.

Q: I assume that also you didn't have a chance to see where your work was leading in policy terms.

OAKLEY: The issue of looking at the future has always been a challenge for the State Department. There is a problem of how far ahead one can or should look. I think a lot of people felt, and I understand their view, that we did more explanation than prediction. People would find out after the fact why certain events took placProjections are risky. CIA in its analysis often would provide a range of predictions, possible outcomes, or possibilities. It felt that once it provided this analysis, its task was complete. But in the Department we were much closer to the policy process; we had to give some indication of the most likely possibility or outcome because the decision makers had to have some feel for the consequences of their actions. Sometimes what we did was quite clear. If, for example, someone took action contrary to what the U.S. had been told, we could voice our displeasure. But so many of the issues we faced were much murkier. Decision makers wanted to know what was likely to happen under various circumstances.

When I was in INR, from 1991 to 1993, a great deal of attention was devoted to Bosnia and Yugoslavia as they disintegrated. I was surprised how many people knew Yugoslavia. INR had some top-notch analysts working on this area. They finally came to question the impact of the intelligence analysis they were producing. They had been predicting disintegration, but there was no political will in the government to take preventive action. People were stuck in their mindsets as to what was possible. It was an election period; Baker had had enough overseas involvement after the Gulf War. He was inclined to view Yugoslavia as an European problem to be resolved by them. Eagleburger, who was the deputy secretary, had a major influence on our Balkan policy and he was firmly opposed to U.S. involvement. So our policy essentially developed into a damage limitation effort. Then Germany recognized Croatia and the disintegration spiraled further downward. All of the analysts kept waiting for Kosovo to blow up, in light of the ethnic persecution there.

As time passed, the analysts became more and more demoralized because they had foreseen and predicted all of the disintegration, but the policy makers paid no attention to them. I have said that, in retrospect, had policymakers paid more attention to their warnings, we might have taken a different posture. We might not have able to stop the disintegration, but we might have insisted on a peaceful dissolution of Yugoslavia and Bosnia. There could have been the establishment of an independent Croatia, an independent Serbia, an independent Slovenia and even perhaps an independent Kosovo through mediation and political dialogue. Eventually, we did try to stop the fighting, but it was much later than it needed to be.

Q: Were there any other issues which interested you?

OAKLEY: There weren't many European issues. The change from Soviet Union to Russia was an on going process. Haiti was a hot issue - and Somalia. On the latter, the focus was on the humanitarian side, because we no longer had an embassy there.

Q: Did you find the CIA reporting useful?

OAKLEY: I never felt that the Agency's analysis was as good as ours, and many of the CIA senior officials agreed. The Agency had too many layers; its analysis was very cautious, filled with caveats. On the other hand, they dealt much more with military and technical matters we were just not equipped to handle - nor was INR ever expected to handle.

As I have said, the closeness of the relationship between the Secretary and the INR Assistant Secretary is clearly seen and is very important. It is a very important element for an effective INR head. Mort Abramowitz was very close to Shultz. Hal Saunders was very close to Kissinger. But Doug Mulholland was never closely connected with Baker's policy process.

Q: Baker apparently relied just on a small group of advisors, which focused on a few key matters and left the rest for the Department to struggle with. Yugoslavia apparently fell into the latter category.

OAKLEY: I think all of that is true. In addition, it was not in Mulholland's nature to force his way into the secretary's suite and insist that he pay more attention to INR's analysis. And the whole foreign policy process was overtaken by the American political situation; i.e. stay out of trouble in the election period of 1992.

I should note that I have not discussed my first tour in INR to the same extent that I did my work in Pakistan or other assignments. I was there for only two years whereas my other assignments were usually for three years. As I noted before, my conclusion was that an INR deputy's role was not that of analysis, but rather the management of a process - making sure that all pertinent information was flowing to us from the many intelligence sources in the U.S. government, and asking the right questions to elicit the right information. It was frustrating to see how little use was made by the policy makers of the intelligence analyses provided them. In addition, deputies had to spend time on other management issues like personnel - assignments, EEO, morale, and harassment. I had 50 to 60 analysts working for me; their management and their replacements were a full-time job. Some cases had to go to a review board; that tied one's hands even after the case was closed, because often the analyst could not be moved. Civil servants become entrenched in the bureaucracy; they wouldn't and couldn't be moved to other assignments. INR's staff came primarily from the civil service and that raised tremendous problems because their promotional opportunities were very limited. In the past, management did not have to worry if it had a highly regarded analyst; he or she could be promoted without changing jobs. But that is not allowed under today's rules. So you are caught by the desire to keep that analyst and his or her need for a promotion. Without the opportunity for greater income, the analyst becomes frustrated and leaves. So management of civil servants was a very complicated matter, particularly when it came to firing or reassignment. I think that senior managers in the Department must come to grips with this problem; there must an opportunity for advancement even if the nature of the job doesn't change. The opportunity in INR to mix civil servants and Foreign Service officers was a real plus; the latter brought a different perspective that was really healthy. In the period of 1991-1993, INR was not under as much pressure to reduce its budget as in later periods.

Baker left in early 1992 to become the Bush campaign manager. A lot of people said if he had assumed that role earlier, Bush's campaign might have been different, and better, and Bush might have won. In November, 1992 Clinton won the election. The bureaucracy then began to prepare for a new administration - in early 1993 Warren Christopher became Secretary of State. He brought a lot of new faces into the Department. Toby Gotti was appointed head of INR. I stayed until new deputies were appointed. Jim Steinberg was my successor.

Q: How did the change in administrations go?

OAKLEY: I think changes are always a little messy. There is a period when there are more questions than answers. Who would be the next INR assistant secretary? Then, who would he or she appoint as deputies? I think the Clinton people took a greater interest in the appointments of deputies than most other administrations; they were interested in diversity and placing many new people but it was not a very well organized effort. It was my intention to leave; a new chief should select his or her own deputies; furthermore, I thought it was time to move on and do something else. I liked my tour in INR, although it was not my favorite assignment in the Foreign Service. I must say that the new administration's people were not at all shy or very polite about telling people that their time was up!

One of the interesting aspects of the Department's changeover was the arrival of this slew of new people who came with Christopher, including Tim Wirth - former senator from Colorado who was appointed as the new Under Secretary for Global Affairs (an office designated as "G"). I remember that in early 1993, the Clinton people were scurrying around looking for Foreign Service officers, particularly women. I was asked by Wirth whether I would be interested in working on human rights, democracy and labor. I really was not because those issues had never been front and center in my interests. So I didn't think that would be a good fit. Then he asked whether I would be interested in working in the refugee bureau as the deputy director, and that was a lot more interesting.

Q: What happened to you in 1993, after your INR tour?

OAKLEY: As I said, a new administration took office in 1993. This was a Democratic administration after Republicans had occupied the White House for twelve years. So there was a "clean sweep" mentality among the newcomers, which was fine by me because after two years in INR, although the subject matter was fascinating, I was ready to move on.

I mentioned that I had been offered a couple of jobs by Tim Wirth. He came to the Department as a committed environmentalist and supporter of family planning. With all his Congressional experience, he knew the private, non-governmental world of NGOs and activists, and was very knowledgeable about many aspects of the issues that he was expected to handle, and he was energetic and determined. I liked him from the first time I met him. I saw the energy and I thought that working for him would be a lot of fun. Wirth had been a senator; he had come to Congress in what was called the "Class of 1974" - a group that had opposed the Vietnam War and which was eager to see reforms enacted. They were "Young Turks" who had held out a lot of hope for Bobby Kennedy, but after his assassination, it took them a long time to rise to power. It was a remarkable group of Congressmen.

Tim had decided that he didn't want to run for the Senate again. I think he hoped to be appointed as Secretary of Energy or Secretary of Interior. That didn't happen, primarily because of the Clinton's administration emphasis on diversity; the energy job went to a woman. So he was offered the Global Under Secretaryship at State.

The offer that Tim made to me was Deputy Director of the Office of Refugee Affairs or Principal Deputy. The director then was Warren Zimmermann, whom I didn't know personally, although I was familiar with his reputation because had been our ambassador to Yugoslavia and he had also worked on many European issues. He had been the refugee office director for about a year when the administration changed. His main focus in 1993 was Bosnia, the major relief effort that had started in 1991. Warren is a fine, wonderful man - a consummate diplomat, a man of principle. I think he would have preferred to be our ambassador in Moscow or to some other Eastern European post where he would have worked more closely on longstanding issues of personal interest. He was nevertheless very interested in the fate of refugees.

I became the principal deputy in September, 1993 and served under G, or Wirth, until 1997. I think there was always the understanding that if and when Warren left, I would assume the duties of office director. In Tim's reorganization of the Under Secretary's office, the Office of Refugee Affairs became a bureau by adding population to refugee and migration issues. So Warren's successor was to be the first assistant secretary of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. One of the reasons the office could be upgraded to bureau was because the Office of Population Affairs was added to it. Tim Wirth felt passionately about population issues and I think his reorganization was backed by the White House, that wanted to make it more of a political issue and not just development. As you may remember, one of Clinton's first acts was to reverse our position on "Mexico City language." That is a complicated issue, but essentially it barred U.S. government funds from being allocated to international family planning organizations which espoused international family planning if that organization's work included support for abortion - even if those programs were funded by other resources and conducted where abortion was legal. The restriction had been first put in place by Reagan at a conference on women held in Mexico City - and hence the name.

AID traditionally had been the lead agency on population programs and therefore U.S. policy, working with both NGOs and international organizations. Tim felt that the issue was more important and broader than just implementation, and that the Department had to become the main policy making engine on family planning. The Clinton administration was soon to participate in an international conference to be held in Cairo in the fall of 1994 on population and development and was beginning to plan for it. Tim was building toward that important meeting.

He had already selected Faith Mitchell, a woman from California, to head that part of the Bureau dealing with family planning. She came out of the NGO world and had a strong background in women's health. I certainly didn't have any background on these issues.

The Bureau of Refugee Affairs had grown out of our experiences with Vietnamese refugees. What we had done earlier to support UNRWA or UNHRC had been done through the UN; i.e. through IO. When the Vietnamese refugee issue began in 1970s - and continued into the late 1980s with the "boat people" - considerable direct U.S. government involvement was called for to help these people, and the separate office was created. This is also a very complicated issue. In 1993, we were still working with the "boat people" - people who had fled Vietnam by ship and initially had been refused refuge by several Asian countries. The Afghan refugee program was also winding down. Then there was the Lautenberg Amendment, which made it much easier for Jews and Evangelical Christians living in the former Soviet Union to apply for refugee status in the U.S. So those were our large programs.

We also worked on a lot of migration issues with our European allies, involving the large influx of former Yugoslav citizens, most of which was done illegally. The real question was whether these people would ever return to their homes from Western Europe when the dust settled in the Balkans.

It was a new world for me. I had dealt with many of the NGOs and UNHCR when I was the Afghanistan desk officer and was worrying about Afghan refugees. Also I had seen many of these organizations in action when I was in Pakistan working with the Afghan humanitarian program. The Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) had about 100 people, both from the Civil Service and Foreign Service. A lot of Foreign Service officers were introduced to refugee problems and work around the world in the course of their overseas tours and became passionate about the problem. Furthermore, there were a number in the Bureau who, mostly for family reasons, did not want to go overseas again - they converted to Civil Service. So the bureau included a lot of very dedicated people. We had the largest budgetary account in the Department, usually in the range of $500-700 million. There were some devoted members of Congress who decided that the bureau should be exempt from personnel ceilings imposed on other parts of the Department; so we had our own staffing authority outside the jurisdiction of the Department. After consultation with Congress, for example, we could hire part-time or short-term people. Our freedom for action in the personnel field made a lot of sense for sudden refugee and humanitarian problems.

As I said, I worked as the Senior Deputy for a little more than a year. By early 1993, it became clear that Warren Zimmermann would not be selected to be the first assistant secretary of the new bureau. The administration was looking for diversity; this was another time for me when it was useful to be a woman. There just were not enough of them at the assistant secretary level in the Department.

Q: Did you find it somewhat uncomfortable to appear to belong to a "privileged" class?

OAKLEY: It was uncomfortable. I would have been more than happy to continue as Warren's deputy - that would have suited me fine. But I think when he saw that he would not be appointed as assistant secretary and that there was no other senior assignment on the horizon, he decided to retire, despite the fact that he was recognized as an outstanding officer who had served his government very well. He began to teach at the New School in New York and then later at Columbia University. I have heard that he is a great professor. I think he is now retired again and working on a book about U.S. imperialism in the Philippines.

There was an interesting side-play on the choice of Assistant Secretary: there had been no political people who had put their names forward to head the new bureau as refugees were just not politically "hot." Wirth, I think, wanted me for the job but soon ran into two problems - first of all, with addition of responsibility for population, the bureau was becoming a more attractive spot. The second concerned a woman from Arkansas, who had worked in Washington under Carter as an assistant secretary in Agriculture, and had a good reputation, who began to eye the job. But in the end her candidacy was aborted because she was the sister of the governor of Arkansas, and he developed legal difficulties and was indicted. Then she was no longer politically attractive!

At that point, a wonderful thing happened to me. Meg Greenfield, the editor of the editorial page of The Washington Post and a good friend, heard about the political competition for PRM. She wrote an editorial saying that the bureau already had on its staff a real professional woman who was well qualified and that she thought it was most unfortunate that others were being considered to be assistant secretary, particularly outsiders who had very little if any knowledge of refugee affairs. I think that editorial had a tremendous impact. At the same time, a rumor began to float around the Department - I never knew how it got started - to the effect that I had made some negative comments about Warren Christopher at a dinner party. Vernon Jordan allegedly had heard these comments. Now Vernon was a good friend of mine; we lived in the same general neighborhood and had played tennis together. One day, I saw him in the hall of the Department and told him about the rumor. He said he would take care of it; I think he went straight in to talk to someone on the seventh floor and that was the end of the rumor.

I found the selection process to be quite fascinating because I had never seen such an interplay between those who worked on political placement and Foreign Service politics. In the end, given all the politics, I was almost surprised but very pleased when I became the administration's candidate for the Assistant Secretaryship.

Q: In the selection process, was there a lot of support for Zimmermann?

OAKLEY: I don't remember that being much of a factor. He was obviously disappointed at not being selected, but I think he was really ready for a change. Certainly I made no moves to put myself forward at his expense or anyone else's; as I said, I would have been very happy to be his principal deputy. In fact, I thought that was what would happen.

Q: Did you have any problem with confirmation?

OAKLEY: I had no problems. They asked me the usual questions about my experience. I did have one advantage in that my husband had appeared before the same Senate committee for his confirmation hearings. So we had all the necessary records about domestic servants that we had employed, Social Security payments we had made for them and tax returns. He also had filed financial disclosure statements; so the committee already knew a lot about us. I did tell Wendy Sherman, the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, that one of our neighbors had once complained about our dogs - they allegedly barked too much. The police were called but dismissed the complaint. When the young officer came to the door with her complaint, my mother-in-law answered and told her that we hardly mistreated our dogs - we even slept with them! But I had no problems with confirmation.

By this time, we had lost a great refugee champion in the Senate - Mark Hatfield. I had called on him when I first began to work on refugee issues because he was so vitally interested in this issue and really had to give his approval. He had been a real champion for our causes and protected our appropriations.

Two days after being sworn in in a brief ceremony in early September, 1994, I left for Cairo for the UN Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). That was a real experience. Our delegation was filled with political appointees, NGOs, members of Congress, and representatives of various departments. The Vice President came through Cairo for a brief appearance at the conference. Tim Wirth was there with a number of his former congressional staffers, who continued to work for him in many ways. There were numerous NGOs in attendance at a parallel, non-governmental conference. It was a huge affair.

There had been a great deal of preparatory work at the UN so that the draft resolution would be acceptable to the broad range of interests represented in Cairo. The negotiating process in the UN is very complicated, with bracketed language when there is disagreement. The wording on teenagers, abortion, maternal health, and on what assistance should be provided by the developed world became key to success by one side or the other. I must say that my experiences with these resolutions made me wonder after they were drafted what their meaning really was. But there were a lot of tough negotiations on language - it is very interesting that the Iranians, who had been hit by a population explosion, became quite amenable and helpful to our efforts to prevent restrictive language on reproductive health and family planning.

Our problems were primarily with Muslim regimes governed by fundamentalists and with those governments on which the Catholic Church had strong influence, like many in Latin America. Some chose to take a hard line; others did not. China was very sensitive about its one child policy, which had been widely criticized. So there were many currents at play in Cairo.

We were there for two weeks. I left for a few days to fly to Addis Ababa for a conference on refugee problems in Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia. But the two weeks were full of negotiations, meetings, receptions, and exhibitions. In the end, I think everyone on the American delegation felt we had achieved as much as we could have hoped in moving nations toward agreed goals. We worked with a lot of other countries and organizations that were as interested in and as passionate about the necessity for family planning in economic development as we were. The Scandinavians were the most liberal block, and with the Dutch, kept up pressure from that perspective. By the end of the conference, I think the majority of the delegations felt we had made real progress in supporting family planning and education on reproductive health issues. There was also a consensus that the developed world had responsibility for providing the necessary resources so that less developed countries could conduct family planning programs. Abortion was not really an issue.

The American delegation thought that from our perspective the conference came out well. No doubt it was primarily due to Tim Wirth's work. Based on his experiences as a senator, he was well equipped to deal with outside constituencies, whether on the environment or population. He enlisted the advice of outside groups in forming the U.S. delegation, which consisted of government professionals as well, experienced in how international conferences are run and how UN negotiations are conducted, and of others who knew the NGO world. We all worked well together and the final document included language that we felt very good about. Of course, there is the fair question whether language in a UN document changes the real world. It doesn't, but it did put countries on record. Since 1994, there have been various efforts made to rollback the language of the Cairo document. Catholic countries, which are very heavily influenced by the Vatican on questions of abortion and family planning, and some Muslim countries who take a very rigid and restrictive view on women's issues, have tried to move back from their Cairo commitments. As I mentioned before, some of our closest collaborators were the Iranians who had gone through a period of rapid population growth and then experienced the consequences on their societal infrastructure. When we returned to Washington, we had to face the issue of implementation of the agreed policies - it is much harder to get money than write a set of principles.

I should certainly at this point make mention of the refugee crises of the 1990s. There had been earlier huge refugee problems, starting with the Vietnamese. The U.S. government and the predecessors of the PRM bureau organized themselves to address that particular challenge. Efforts were well coordinated among the Department of Health and Human Services, INS, State Department, and UN agencies. That became the model for later efforts. Then came the Afghan problem in the early '80s; that was not so much an issue of resettlement as it was a matter of feeding and housing a displaced mass of people, well over two million. We had to work closely with Pakistan, which set itself up bureaucratically to direct and organize the assistance.

At the end of the Gulf War, the U.S. faced the question of Iraqi refugees. Then came the Balkans, Bosnia particularly, which again was more a relief effort than a resettlement problem. So the 1990s were a period of great effort on refugees and humanitarian assistance.

The PRM bureau in the Department, that had the lead role on these issues, was a very new one. As noted earlier, the functions started in IO, then became an office and in 1994 a bureau, and I was the first Assistant Secretary. PRM had many Foreign Service officers who became so engaged with refugee and assistance work that they converted to Civil Service in order to stay in the bureau and with the work. We needed that kind of built-in expertise, particularly on program management. We had the largest operational budget in the State Department, which was earmarked by Congressional mandate. We handled close to $700 million per annum; we had to make sure that the money was well spent and every penny accounted for. We all took satisfaction that no problems ever arose over our management of those funds.

Q: Tell us a little more about the Rwanda refugee problems.

OAKLEY: This occurred in the summer of 1995 and was a relief effort, not a resettlement one. By the mid-'90s there was throughout the world a group of very capable and experienced NGOs who had handled many refugee crises. Leadership rested with the UNHCR, led by Mrs. Ogato, a Japanese woman of incredible strength and ability who was UNHCR's head. Usually, in a refugee or humanitarian crisis of any magnitude, one UN agency is appointed the lead agency. Someone has to be responsible for pulling all the other efforts together, although that is a major challenge when it comes to the NGOs who thrive on their independence. I think that is particularly true of foreign NGOs; I think American NGOs have learned that their efforts will be much more successful if there is a coordinator working to reduce the chaos which always seems to be present at the beginning of a refugee problem.

In Rwanda, the UNHCR had the lead role. UNICEF did a lot of work, particularly on water issues. WHO assisted, as did the World Food Program, which provided food. There had been considerable amounts of foodstuffs stored in Ethiopia because of the systemic famines and crises that had arisen in the Horn of Africa. So some food was readily available in a near-by country. The U.S. Army brought in huge black trailers which held "water bladders" - huge rubber containers for water. The French also were involved in providing water supplies.

The Hutu refugees started pouring out of Rwanda, first into Tanzania, and in July into eastern Zaire. About July 14, I flew out to see the crisis with Secretary of Defense Perry, General Jowlon on EUCON, Nan Borton of OFDA, and Julia Taft of Interaction, the NGO coordinating organization. When we landed in Goma, we were welcomed very formally - in the old French tradition - by Zairians. They thought this was my first visit and I pointed out to them that in fact I had lived in their country for three years! The assistance group that I will always remember was the San Francisco Fire Department's pumping unit. They had been flown to Zaire. UNHCR had developed an air cell in Geneva that handled air traffic management for all of the planes going in and out of Goma. There were no hangars, fuel was scarce, and people got only a certain amount of time on the apron and then had to leave, and they did leave. No planes were allowed to land until the runways and aprons had been cleared. It was an amazing operation.

We flew over refugee encampments on lava fields around Goma where there were more people milling about than I had ever seen. Jerry cans were being filled with water. One could see everywhere the ubiquitous UN blue sheeting that had been given to the refugees to make whatever shelter they could. Eventually, the UNHCR got matters under control; the cholera epidemic was brought to a halt; bodies were buried and survivors settled. It was a success story that I don't think ever got the recognition it deserved.

There were a lot of mistakes made; there always are in situations such as these. The U.S. and others should have tried to stop the genocide in Rwanda and provided assistance long before we did, but we were still suffering from our experiences in Somalia and not anxious to become involved in another humanitarian tragedy so soon - and not in the same way. President Clinton was concerned politically about the potential loss of U.S. soldiers' lives as had happened in Somalia. He has since admitted the U.S. should have done more.

One of the major problems was security in the refugee camps. By international practice, camp security is the responsibility of the host government. It wasn't provided in eastern Zaire because the Zairian state was crumbling so fast in the last years of Mobutu. I remembered what my husband had done when we needed more security in Kinshasa. He essentially rented people from the Zairian army; we fed them, clothed them, provided medical services, equipped them; in the final analysis they worked for us. I suggested to Mrs. Ogato that that is what she should do and eventually, that did it. She rented army units, gave them trailers to sleep in and they acted as military police. They were a great help, although they didn't meet all of the needs.

Q: I have heard that the Hutus used the camps as staging areas from which they would mount their ethnic cleansing campaigns.

OAKLEY: Many of the Hutu fighters went further west into Zairian army camps, taking equipment with them to be prepared to reenter Rwanda at a later time. One could tell from the new boots worn by some of the young men in the refugee camps that they were getting help and that there were elements in the refugee camps determined to fight again. The consensus was that support came from Hutus living abroad who had the resources to procure and distribute equipment.

After the refugees were settled, attacks into western Rwanda continued. Kagame, the leader of the victorious Tutsis in Rwanda, was a very smart and dedicated leader. He felt that the refugees had to return to their homes and the camps had to be closed down, eliminating the armed camps supporting the Hutus. Things got so bad the Canadians almost intervened in December, 1995 as peacekeepers to try to resolve the continuing raids and tribal conflicts. The UNHCR was trying to disband the camps and to get the refugees to return home, but it was a slow bureaucratic process. The government of Rwanda got impatient and when it appeared that nothing would happen quickly with the camps. UNHCR on its side had worked out complicated plans to use buses for repatriation with way stations along the route, and a system to identify each refugee. This might have worked under ideal circumstances. But the Rwandan government finally said that it couldn't wait any longer for repatriation to start and just entered the camps, telling the refugees to get going with only a rudimentary transportation system. Most had to walk - they had walked out and could walk back home as distances were short. They did not establish any way stations because they knew people would stop and probably disappear. So their program called for a very quick return of the refugees, back to their home villages. It was far from perfect, but it did get the Rwandans home in record time with a minimum of fuss. I took my hat off to them; in truth it would never have come about if they had followed all the instructions that UNHCR and other international groups wanted to impose. I talked all of this over when I went to Geneva for UNHCR meetings in October of 1996 and even UNHCR had to admit they were impressed by the speed and impact of the repatriation operation, although critical of certain aspects. I got to know some of the Rwandans very well and we had some fascinating discussions about how they had managed the return.

Q: How did the aftermath work out?

OAKLEY: Unfortunately, the aftermath is still ongoing. Eastern Zaire was and is chaotic; there were many refugees who didn't want to return to Rwanda and they moved further west into the forests. No one knew how many there were; in some instances, some were massacred by locals and chaos ruled in a huge area. This was happening as Mobutu's rule was coming to an end, with the country splintering; there was no Zairian government presence to control groups that continued to raid western Rwanda or to move into Uganda. All of these factors allowed forces from Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, Angola and Zimbabwe to move into Zaire. This chaos was called the "first world war" in Africa. In the last couple of years, there have been discussions of and some attempts at UN peacekeeping, but there is still no peace to keep in eastern Zaire.

I don't want to take too much time on the Rwandan situation, but it did show the consequences of a chaotic situation in the absence of effective governmental control. You must contrast eastern Zaire to the situation in Tanzania where there was an effective government and organized refugee return.

Q: Did European countries contribute? There are many who take credit for whatever little was accomplished.

OAKLEY: Many countries and people contributed, and we never had any difficulty working with them. Usually those in the field or in Geneva were people that I had known for sometime. The challenge that continues to hamper international efforts to ease humanitarian situations is the availability of adequate resources. The U.S. (followed by the EU and Japan) has always been the largest donor to UNHCR. We have always provided more to UN food programs than any other country. Congress earmarked certain funds to be paid to the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) and has kept up those contributions. Representatives of some of these international organizations would complain to me that they were having troubles with the Europeans who were not paying what they used to. There is clearly donor fatigue in the international donor community. Resources for a new crisis came rather easily but public interest wanes before the problem is really solved. A new crisis arises which piques public interest, often in part stimulated by NGOs who in the last few years have learned how to garner publicity and public support. They demand that governments shift attention from old problems to new ones. Look at Angola and Somalia - situations that have never been resolved and where humanitarian needs still exist. But now there isn't much public clamor for U.S. involvement in those places.

In the 1970s and 1980s, refugee crises were not in Africa - they were in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. These were situations that resulted primarily from the Cold War and anti-communism. But in the 1990s, refugees in Africa had come to the forefront of humanitarian concern. Countries are no longer as welcoming to refugees as they used to be. I think that about 25% of all Africans fall into the refugee category; that is an astounding statistic.

Q: The illegal immigrant problem has become a major one for Europe that has long and porous borders.

OAKLEY: I view the problems in Europe as migration issues, not refugee problems. Mass movements of illegal immigrants are caused by societies that can not offer any economic opportunities, particularly to young men who are determined to rise economically and who are aware of better lives that exist in other countries. This is a growing problem, stimulated by population pressure plus the information revolution that makes information available to most - through TV, computers, and VCRs. Everyone thinks they know what life is like elsewhere. Kurds, Moroccans, Africans from the Sahel, etc., are all pushing on Europe, especially on that part that Winston Churchill described as "the soft underbelly." We get the same pressure from Mexico. It is no surprise the economically wealthy countries are the first and most desirable targets.

Q: What did the Bureau for Refugee Affairs do about such issues as the Kurds, Angolans, Somalis - refugees from areas in which we had had some involvement?

OAKLEY: We are really talking about two things. Our humanitarian assistance programs in place, particularly for Africa, grew year after year. Refugee resettlement in a third country is another issue. According to U.S. law and international norms, a person who wishes to be designated as a refugee must demonstrate he or she has a well founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, or political or social affiliation, on an individual basis, if returned to the country of origin. The standard goes beyond the general and the threat has to be definite and concrete. The U.S. has established criteria for the screening of potential refugees, including what must be demonstrated as proof, and the countries they come from; when approved they are brought to the U.S. for resettlement. Most African refugees left their homes because their leaders instructed them to; e.g. the Hutus pouring out of Rwanda. In that situation, for the first time in anyone's memory, the perpetrators of genocide lost the confrontation. The Tutsis reconquered the country and the Hutus fled. So individual Hutus did not qualify for refugee status in the U.S. because they did not have a well-founded fear of persecution - they had been the persecutors.

There are other situations were refugee status is granted in Africa. Recently, as discussed in The New York Times magazine section, there was the saga of the "lost boys" of the southern Sudan. These were young men who had been caught up for a decade of fighting between the North and the South; they wandered from place to place as the fighting moved around. They went into Ethiopia and then returned to the Sudan and then fled to Kenya - all on foot. There are about 10,000 of these boys in Kenya - most of them illiterate, with many who have never seen a water faucet or a toilet bowl. The challenge of bringing to the U.S. such a group, who have never had an opportunity at anything resembling home life, is huge, as you can well imagine. They need to be taught all the fundamentals of living and then how to become economically self-sufficient in American society. I think all these migration and refugee issues are going to become increasingly difficult. When Afghans came to the U.S., they were mostly from an educated class and the same is true for refugees from the Soviet Union. The Vietnamese had a more difficult adaptation process, but most of them managed it very well with strong families. The ones that have problems are primarily illiterate or from tribes and therefore only accustomed to a very small clan. They have the hardest time making the adjustment.

Each refugee-migrant case was and is a story in itself. You can't generalize about refugees or migrants - all cases are unique.

Q: Was the Yugoslav program well underway when you arrived in RPM?

OAKLEY: The humanitarian relief system for Bosnia was established by the time I came on board in 1993, but there were other incidents later which created problems. There was increasing Serb near-genocide, as illustrated by events in Srebrenica when the Serbs separated out the men and slaughtered most of thel flew to Europe immediately, and traveled from Geneva to the troubled area by helicopter with Mrs. Ogata. There were masses of women who had been bused to the airstrip; they lined up in front of Red Cross tables to give the names of the missing. There was hope at the time that the missing men were being held in captivity and would eventually be released unharmed. In a few weeks, it became clear that most of these men had been killed. It was an amazing, heartbreaking experience. Mrs. Ogata was absolutely terrific; she would wander from group to group and then sit down to talk. The registration system began to work fairly rapidly, so that we knew the magnitude of the problem relatively soon. Supplies began to arrive. It was mid-summer and it was very hot; relief workers were setting up tents for these refugees so that they could at least escape the sun.

There was one incident that I have treasured. I was sitting with a group of women, trying to learn of their experiences, and I started the conversation by asking how much time they had been given to evacuate their houses. What had they done about food? Were they able to bring anything with them? It was particularly difficult for those with small children. The conversation went on and on. When it was over and we were dispersing, the interpreter said to me that the women wanted me to know that they liked my shoes! That was a very sophisticated, European reaction. It told me that those women were still alive and "with it;" while they would not make a comment like that directly to me because it might have sounded frivolous, they had taken notice.

After I left the bureau, Kosovo erupted, and a million and a half people fled. Never had there been such a rapid exodus, followed by such a rapid return, all within a four or five month period. People were critical of U.S. and other relief efforts because they felt we had not intervened quickly enough. They forget that there had never been such a mass outpouring and return within such a short period in the history of the world; it was truly a whole new episode in humanitarian work.

Haiti was a continuing problem. Refugees were leaving the island in droves to try to get to Florida. Those who managed to land began to complain bitterly and loudly that they were being treated differently from others arriving on U.S. shores to claim political asylum. No doubt about it, the legislation was discriminatory and favored Cubans, but many Floridians were dead set against opening the doors for Haitians and therefore no change in the law was demanded. Most Haitians were intercepted at sea and sent back to Haiti to be processed as refugees. That is "in-country refugee processing" - a very unusual process that we have done in a few countries only, like Vietnam and the Soviet Union (for those who qualified under the Lautenberg amendment), for political reasons. Intelligence kept saying that the determinant causing people to flee was not the amount of repression in Haiti but the calculation on how strict the Coast Guard was being and whether they could get in. For lots of political reasons, Randall Robinson of Transafrica, who had been very involved in African issues and particularly South Africa, took up the Haitian cause and finally prevailed on President Clinton to order refugee processing for Haitians on boats, and not to send them back to Haiti for processing. We were dumbstruck; refugee processing just wasn't feasible aboard those rickety rafts that passed as "boats." Furthermore, when knowledge of this new process became known, we knew we would be overwhelmed. We would also be confronted by other major issues such as what would happen to sick people - would we bring them to the U.S. where they were not welcome or take them back to Haiti, which was not really acceptable? Third countries were not interested either. We tried to raise these problems at the early meetings held to discuss Robinson's proposals. I remember Sandy Berger sitting in the White House Situation Room saying that the President had decided period and that was what we were going to do - no use arguing about it - just do it! So PRM saluted and organized a process that involved renting cruise and other ships. We got permission from the Jamaican government to anchor off Montego Bay or Kingston Harbor so the ships could be supplied. As we had predicted, as soon as the Haitians heard about this new process, they fled Haiti in larger droves and the processing ships were soon overwhelmed.

Cubans saw what was happening and said that if the Haitians were going to be processed at sea, they should have similar access to the processing ships (easier than getting to Florida!). The ships were soon so overrun that more could not be handled - Cubans also came from their island in droves. We then faced the incredible challenge of where else we could take them to be processed. We finally rented an old air force base in Panama and also used Guantanamo. Those facilities in turn also became overwhelmed; there were growing questions of how many from State and INS were available to do the screening, who would take care of the health problems, and what to do with the sick and insane. Finally the administration had to reverse course - it had to go back to in-country processing in Haiti, and further negotiations with Cuba on numbers allowed to leave.

It is an incredible chapter from the Clinton administration, never talked about. In dealing with large numbers of human beings, there are always some who are sick, HIV positive, or mentally unstable. You don't want to admit these people to the U.S., to become public charges, but how can any of them be returned without providing some assistance? Processing of these major emigration flows was a nightmare. Finally there was U.S. intervention in Haiti and a UN/OAS process to restore President Aristide. The goals were much less ambitious than they had been in Somalia and these limited goals were achieved. It is true that Haiti is no further along today in its development than it was ten or fifteen years ago, but the refugee crisis has passed, and a democratically elected ruler was returned to power. We all know that the U.S. has tried to intervene in Haiti throughout the 20th Century. My mother told me that while she was in college in the 1920s, she joined a movement at the University of Nebraska against U.S. military intervention in Haiti. (They protested by wearing their slickers open!) Problems there continue. No one in the Clinton administration ever talks about Haiti; it was buried.

Q: Did you encounter any problems with the regional bureaus on turf issues?

OAKLEY: It depended on the region. I must say that PRM had no problems along those lines with Dick Holbrooke, who is an old friend, concerning the Balkans. There were no issues of that kind with him or his bureau. The more we could do to help in his area, the better he liked it. This was at a time when he was preparing for and leading the Dayton negotiations. He was anxious that I go out to the Balkans and observe the situation at Tuzla after the Serb massacres with my own eyes. So he gave us a lot of support.

I felt that when Rwanda really began to fall apart with the flood of refugees into Tanzania and Zaire that we were well organized in the State Department to meet that challenge. That was true for Department and the U.S. government as a whole, and for the international and/or UN community to some extent. AID, through its food program, was involved in the Rwanda problem. PRM was going to take care of big contributions to UNHCR and the ICRC; African Affairs [AF] was naturally involved politically as was the Human Rights Bureau. But in the Department itself, there was no one person or office that was managing the total issue. Brian Atwood, the director of AID, was designated as the U.S. government's lead person, but he did not give constant attention to the problem. He would chair a meeting periodically and then leave the issue - there was a feeling that he didn't devote enough attention to Rwanda. Finally Doug Stafford of AID and I agreed that more frequent meetings were necessary so that the various programs could be coordinated. At last, in part because of my continuing protests, Tim Wirth was appointed as the lead person on Rwanda. There had to be some senior Department official who would coordinate all the various U.S. government activities. Furthermore, the NSC had to appoint an individual who could speak for the President and the White House. I was glad to see in the last years of the Clinton administration "PD"(presidential decision) 56 issued, that was an attempt to organize the bureaucracy for humanitarian emergencies so that all parts would know what their responsibilities were, how they fit together, and how the coordinating process was to work. There just had to be a coordinating mechanism in the U.S. government for humanitarian crises such as Rwanda.

I think the international community has improved the management of its efforts as well. The UN created a new Office for Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA, that is supposed to coordinate the efforts of all the specialized agencies - WFP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, UNHCR - that was also badly needed. The new system has not yet really been tested by another situation like Rwanda, except perhaps for Kosovo. I think in that case, the new system worked reasonably well, although it may not have been a good test because the Kosovo emergency was over relatively quickly. I was not involved then so my observations are second and third hand.

Q: How long were you the assistant secretary?

OAKLEY: I worked as PRM Assistant Secretary for three years. I joined the bureau as principal deputy toward the end of the summer of 1993; I was sworn in as assistant secretary in fall 1994 and stayed there until fall 1997.

In early 1997, there was a change of Secretary of State and that obviously changed lots of people and the way the Department operated. I had loved the challenge of being the PRM Assistant Secretary; I had had ideas of what might be done for women's health in refugee camps, for promoting certain projects, for coordinating migration issues and working closely with Doris Meisner, the head of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, etc., but Foreign Service officers do not tend to stay in jobs for any extended period. By 1977, I felt that I had dealt with population and humanitarian affairs long enough; I thought it was time for someone new to take over to bring a fresh look at the issues I had been wrestling with. I didn't want to go on doing the same thing forever.

I had found many parts of the NGO community to be wonderful and admirable, but I found the continuous criticism and pressure from that sector, about what we were not doing - never enough - quite irritating. There are a few organizations that were established simply as refugee advocates who did nothing but criticize us. I thought we were doing the right and appropriate thing, but that was never mentioned! I had also found it very difficult to end refugee programs. It was relatively easy to start one - there is usually a huge outpouring of sympathy and resources are provided for assistance efforts. But I felt that in 1996 and 1997, it was time to end the Vietnamese "boat people" refugee program, or Comprehensive Plan of Action [CPA]. The original agreement had been fulfilled. I believe that the world organizes itself promptly to respond to refugee and humanitarian situations, but it does not seem to be able to end those programs. It prefers to keep people "on the dole" forever even if there are just not enough resources to meet new emergencies if old ones are not closed down. We ran into problems with returning to Vietnam those refugees who had not been accepted for resettlement, particularly in the Hong Kong camps. There were riots. The NGOs took to the streets and the Hong Kong government refused to continue to support these so-called refugees. Most of the people left in the camps came originally from North Vietnam and had fled for economic, not political, reasons. We had set up by this time an orderly departure program (Orderly Departure Program [ODP]) in Vietnam so those with real claims for resettlement did not have to flee in boats.. It was time to close the CPA. But it was a real struggle with some of the NGOs.

Q: I have been told that there were some people in Thailand who were not really refugees, but they were being supported by NGOs and had no incentive to return home.

OAKLEY: NGO staffs are not very well paid, and their status, in my view, comes from what they are able to force governments to do - how strongly they can push and how much influence they have. It takes a different personality than mine to deal with that mindset over a long period of time. I felt that the bureau had done terrific work in the bureau for refugees. The staff was great; it had more women than men by the way. We even had some meetings where there were only one or two men. It was wonderful for me to be able to demonstrate in the Department what we, a largely feminine staff, were able to achieve.

I thoroughly enjoyed my years in G heading PRM. It was a wonderful experience being in charge, but, as I said earlier, at the end of three years as assistant secretary, I felt it was time to move on. My husband had retired by this time; I was in my early 60s and I was not going to ask for anything from the new Albright team in the Department. I thought there possibly might be some openings for me in Washington; I certainly did not want to go overseas. We had moved so often and we had finally settled in completely in Washington. We had grandchildren close by and led a very busy life. My husband had often said that he would be glad to accompany me overseas, stay home and do the wifely chores; I always told him that that didn't pass the "giggle test." It simply would not have worked. In any case, Bob and I had been separated a lot because of our Foreign Service responsibilities - Somalia, Vietnam, part of the Pakistan tour, and then Somalia again. We just didn't want to be separated again.

The Secretary of State was kind enough to offer me an ambassadorship, but that was something I simply did not want to do. I had been an assistant secretary, a title I felt had the same status, so I thought that if a suitable assignment in Washington was not available, I would retire and that would have been fine. Finally, when the INR assistant secretary left, Secretary Madeleine Albright asked me if I would take that job and I said yes right away. I thought that would be suitable and interesting - I had worked there before, and although not my favorite job, being Assistant Secretary would be different. I knew what INR was supposed to do, and I thought it would be a good way to end my career. So I accepted.

This offer was made about February or March 1997. I was amazed how long this second confirmation process took. I think the whole confirmation process has become so intrusive, takes so long, and involves such detailed financial and character checks that it really has gotten out of hand. The Washington Post in its In the Loop column now carries a graph which shows how many nominations have been made and how many confirmed. In the last one, there were 435 nominations that had been put into play and only 100 had been approved. It is so laborious and has so many requirements that it now takes almost a year to get anyone confirmed. That is simply not efficient.

I turned in all the required paperwork. Everything was fine, except in the end, there was a glitch. That came about because I had tried to help the son of a Lebanese friend who had been at an American university - either Princeton or Georgetown - get into graduate school at Columbia. He had been accepted. However, his father during the Lebanese civil war had obtained Brazilian passports for the entire family, even though they were Lebanese. So it was difficult for the son to get his passport and student visa renewed. He was doing this in London during a period when it took a long time to get an appointment at the American embassy. He had an interview that did not go well (his first name is Yassir, a big mistake); in fact he was told he would be an old man before he could get another visa! So he was stuck in London and about to lose his place at Columbia. It was a complicated situation and I didn't know what to do; I had never served as a consular officer. So I called the consul general who I knew and told him the problem as I understood it and I told him I didn't know what to do. I asked whether there might be an opportunity for another interview with a different consular officer. I asked him to look at it; I did not ask him to do anything out of the ordinary. I did not want to contact the consular officer directly as that, I thought, would be inappropriate. I had the impression that the consul general would see this fellow but he did not, and the original consular officer saw him again. And again it was not a good interview and I thought it was over and done with, and there was nothing left to do. Then the consul general called me back and said that he thought that there was something I could do. He suggested that I write to INS and ask them to admit this young man over the objections of our consular officer in London. Apparently, this was a process used all the time because there had been so many problems with the London consular section. So I followed the consul general's suggestion and wrote; the first consular officer heard about it and blew her stack and filed some petition with the Department's Inspector General about undue influence.

Encounters with the Department's Inspector General's office is a whole other issue. There were numerous complaints in the Department about how that office worked, often secretly so that the accused has no opportunity to present another side of the story. In any case, inspectors went to London to pursue the complaint, trying to find out what had gone on. I did not have a clue that any of this was happening. Finally, when I was told what was going on, I said that if they had just come to me I could have shown them the complete file with all the e-mails and exchanges. I was not a bureaucrat for nothing - on something like this I kept all the documentation! As I said, I had never heard of the procedure of an appeal to INS, but since it had been suggested by the consul general, I assumed that it was perfectly legitimate. Finally, someone from INS came to see me and I showed him the file. He immediately said that I had done nothing wrong; there was no shred of impropriety whatsoever. But this investigation held up my confirmation - it was very disagreeable and left a very bad taste.

Q: As a former consul general, it sounds like the procedure that was suggested to you was devised to get around some consular officers who may have been temperamentally not suited for the job.

OAKLEY: Apparently the embassy in London had a huge consular problem. I didn't try to do anything underhanded - the INS appeal procedure had been suggested to me by the consul general. The State inspectors even had gone to INS to look at the letterhead I had used in my correspondence, to see whether I had used official State Department letterhead. In fact, I had written the letter on my computer and my secretary wasn't even involved. I printed it out, but I couldn't remember what stationery I used. It turned out that I used even a private envelope. So the longer the inspectors reviewed the case, the less question there was. It did wonder how the U.S. government had sunk to this low level of trust.

Finally, after several months, I was completely cleared. The "gotcha' [got you]" attitude of the Inspector's Office really irritated me and left a horrible residue of distaste. The system was not open. There was little or no explanation of what the perceived problem was, and there was not much opportunity to present my point of view. I felt many of the inspectors were trying to trap me, probing into my relationship with Yassir's family and asking about gifts! The whole process was so disgusting and so seemingly un-American that I was really furious.

I had another problem in my confirmation process but on a lighter note. Bob and I were on vacation at our beach house in Duck, North Carolina when I got a call from the White House. A young girl by the name of Ashley - just by the name, one knew she must have been under twenty-five - was on the other end of the telephone with a few more questions. Did I pay Social Security for our yardman? I kept explaining that we hired a lawn service; that was a contractual relationship that required the employer to pay all taxes. Then she asked me whether I had paid Social Security taxes for the servants we employed overseas. I tried to explain to her that as an Ambassador's wife I had lived in embassy residences for which we paid an embassy set fee as part of official residence expenses [ORE]. I continued that under State regulations, it was the responsibility of the embassy to manage personnel matters for the staff of the residence, such as leave, taxes, and pensions. She hadn't a clue what I was talking about and couldn't understand the ORE concept. I finally just told her that all taxes had been paid! I also told her that I had always paid Social Security taxes on my Washington help. But the interrogation went on and on; it took over an hour. The last question was whether I had done anything that would embarrass the Clintons! My mouth fell open. I thought, "What Chutzpah!" How could anyone and especially a young girl like Ashley ask a question involving embarrassing the Clintons! It should have been the other way around! I have always wished that question could have been used in some TV show or Washington publication, with a prize for the "best" answer. It was just unbelievable to me, but the question was asked - and firmly answered in the negative!

Q: There must have been a time when you were ready to tell the powers-to-be to "jump in the lake."

OAKLEY: Yes, indeed. I didn't think the whole process of moving to INR had started very well. The formal confirmation hearings in the Senate went very well; but in the fall the committee and the Senate were about to recess before the final vote. So I didn't know what was going to happen or when. Julia Taft, who was designated to succeed me as PRM assistant secretary, was going through the same thing, so I still had my PRM office to sit in. When you are waiting to start a new job, and the wait goes on and on - for six months in my case - you are not inclined to take any new initiatives, and I felt we were all treading water. I didn't think it was proper for me to travel for PRM, although I went to Geneva again for the big UNHCR October meeting.

Finally, on a Monday morning, the Senate voted. In the afternoon someone walked in and swore me as the new INR assistant secretary. That is how I started. I didn't want to have another large swearing-in ceremony; I had done that once for RPM and that was enough. Furthermore, the intelligence community is much smaller and tighter - it is not quite the same thing as dealing with a large number of public NGOs and other outside groups. So at the age of 63, I started my last two years in the Foreign Service as the assistant secretary for the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR).

In retrospect, I have very mixed feelings about that tour. It was the only time in my career when I returned to a bureau or area where I had worked previously. It is true that as assistant secretary I had access to much more information - much of it very sensitive - than I had had as a deputy assistant secretary. Also new were the management requirements of an assistant secretary as well as liaison responsibilities with CIA and other parts of the intelligence community. I was also the person responsible for seeing that the seventh floor principals were informed on all matters that I thought they should know about.

But I must admit, the job didn't have the old kick. There was something missing from the normal rush when you go to a new job. I think I learned, rather late in life, that for me returning to a bureau or country where I had served previously just wasn't as much fun.

Secondly, the resource situation had gotten very bad. Often INR positions were very hard to fill and there was now a general shortage of FSOs. We were begging and borrowing from other agencies for people who could work in INR. So there wasn't enough money or enough people - not just for INR, but the Department as a whole.

Fortunately, I had a very good group of deputies. I had held over one political appointee from the previous assistant secretary but, unfortunately, that didn't work out well and it was not a good fit. I brought in a new person with Congressional experience as the "political" deputy and he was just terrific. Ed Abington was the principal deputy. He had moved into his job before I arrived and as I had know him for my whole Foreign Service career we worked well and easily together.

We are now in the middle of November 1997. Madeleine Albright had started as Secretary of State in January. Ten months later her patterns had been set; for intelligence they had been established when she was at the UN with a CIA briefer. This continued at State, the CIA briefer bringing her the PDB (President's Daily Brief) that only she and the Deputy Secretary saw, as well as other CIA briefing material. I was not permitted to see the PDB, nor did I know what else the CIA brought to her. I did not know if she read the chief INR product, the Secretary's Morning Summary (SMS).

I never felt that Secretary Albright used INR well. I never had the feeling that she and I were on the same wavelength and that was a real problem. I asked her many times whether INR was doing what she wanted and whether we were meeting her needs. She said that she was quite satisfied but nothing more, and there were no requests.

Then we had a security event. It was the only one that happened on my watch but it was serious and got a lot of publicity. We called it the "brown tweed coat" incident. Someone had walked into the secretary's outer office and picked up one of the INR briefcases that had been left by an INR staff member for the Secretary in the Executive Secretariat. That was the way the system worked - State's INR briefer would leave INR material for the Secretary's use during the day when she could get to it, and returned to pick up the briefcase at the end of the day. The secretaries working in the Secretariat that day did not know the person who walked in but did not challenge him. There had never been a problem and they did not think it their job to question the pick-up. So the briefcase with its highly classified material disappeared and could not be found. We did have a record of the material in the briefcase, according to our security practices. I suspected that someone picked it up innocently to return to INR and when he found out what was in it, was embarrassed and didn't want to confess his misdeed. None of the documents reappeared; none of the information included in the material appeared in the press; there were no leaks and no indication ever what might have happened to the briefcase and its contents. But no one knew and it was a very unsettling episode. The secretary received a lot of criticism, suggesting that she was not serious about security, which she did not like. No one could identify the person who had taken the briefcase. Procedures were changed, which emphasized even better control of classified information, and a guard was placed at the entrance to the Executive Secretariat, but all of this was after the horse left the barn.

Afterward we worked hard on our security procedures and spent a lot of time considering our potential vulnerabilities. But we never found out who the mysterious intruder was nor do we know what happened to the material. The whole episode is still a complete mystery as far as I know.

Q: How was the Department in general in its use of INR's classified information?

OAKLEY: We had a range of "customers" throughout the building. Strobe Talbott, the Deputy Secretary, did not appear that interested in INR as INR. He also had a CIA briefer, who kept him up to date on Russian affairs that were his main interest. I don't think he used intelligence information in the way Tom Pickering, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, did. Tom was a vacuum cleaner. He could never get enough information and we supplied him continuously. He knew the system; he knew how to ask for information. He could do this because he had worked in the Department for many years and was used to the intelligence system.

Further, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs was the Department's principal contact with George Tenet, the CIA director, on certain issues. Relations with the geographic bureaus, and such functional bureaus as PM, were always very close. Often our analysts and desk officers would work hand in glove - I know I did when I was the Afghan desk officer.

Secretary Albright liked Tenet; she and he used to have lunch together periodically. As assistant secretary for INR, I always looked for debriefings after meetings and lunches the secretary had with the CIA director, but that was rarely done. She just didn't send information down the line and seemed to be unaware of institutional needs and how such debriefings might benefit her in the long run. The Executive Secretary would try to find out at least what issues had been discussed and whether any follow-up was required but that was not very successful either.

Q: I would think that there would be some danger in top CIA officials discussing matters with top State officials without the filtering prism that INR might provide. There is no opportunity for putting the information in a broader context.

OAKLEY: I agree. I think Madeleine Albright, having been our representative at the UN for four years - long before I took the INR job - thought she knew the context of everything and therefore did not need INR's assistance. So I never established the kind of relationship that I had hoped for and believed necessary. I was not very happy with that state of affairs because I did not think that I was fulfilling a role that the secretary needed. I don' t believe she ever learned how to ask INR for information or analysis nor did she feel she needed it. Later on, she said INR should no longer send her anything on Kosovo as she knew everything she needed! My attempts to discuss intelligence issues in general with her were never scheduled, or kept when scheduled.

Q: Some Foreign Service officers have complained that they felt cut off from the secretary because she had surrounded herself with a "palace guard," similar to what Baker had, although not nearly of as high a caliber as those who surrounded Baker.

OAKLEY: Absolutely. There was a small group of people surrounding her - Barbara Larkin, the assistant secretary for congressional relations, Elaine Shocas, her chief-of-staff; Bonnie Cohen, the Under Secretary for Management (with no experience in the Department); Wendy Sherman, the counselor; Jamie Rubin, the spokesperson, and some staff aids. It was a tight little group around the secretary, difficult to penetrate. Once I had to take her a sensitive paper when the group had gathered in her inner office late in the day, and I felt like an absolute intruder - like a freshman barging in on a group of seniors having a hen party, is the best way I can describe it. I think this group "protecting" her from the bureaucrats only got tighter as her tenure progressed.

The secretary cared very much about Sandy Berger, the national security advisor, not getting intelligence information before she did. He would call her and ask her if she had seen such and such a message and ask what did she intended to do about it. She would be very, very unhappy if she had not seen that message. It was wacky, because the NSC got "intel" flashes before we did, but she was really bothered by Berger having information before she did. Once there had been a report about some military action in Iraq with repercussions in Iran and Sandy Berger called Albright and screamed and yelled. So she called me to find out what was going on, also screaming and yelling. INR had not yet got the report, but we called immediately and began to move into action with NEA to see what should be done. In fact, NSA recalled the message later in the day as not being accurate - and after all the fuss we stood down, without ever a word from the Secretary.

Q: I think many applauded Albright's appointment, but she did not shine and left with a whimper. That was too bad.

OAKLEY: Everybody had such high hopes for Albright, myself included. But she was not a good manager. Being a professor does not give management experience, unless you have to run a department or school, and she had someone to do it for her at USUN. Of course, there were lots of complaints about how the Clinton administration in general was managed. There was no clear delineation of responsibilities. She was clearly not in charge of our entire foreign policy - Berger was the China policy maker, Madeleine Albright handled the Balkans, Talbott ran our Russian policy, and Dennis Ross did the Middle East with Martin Indyk. It was a confused, diffuse structure.

INR, I believe, had excellent relations throughout the Department and within the intelligence community. I enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of coordination meetings at the agency, and always felt that INR was able to make a major, substantive contribution. We were always anxious for feedback, and enjoyed give and take over an issue, and pursuing a problem. I asked repeatedly that we be given feedback on the analyses that we were sending the Secretary. She would agree, but then nothing happened. There was just no response; we never knew what she liked or did not like. Occasionally, she would note her approval of a memorandum. But she never answered the question of what INR might do better for her.

Q: Some people have described the situation as the professor and her graduate assistants.

OAKLEY: I think that is apt. That is the way she had operated much of her life and she just replicated it in the Department. People have said that Warren Christopher ran the Department as a law firm. That was what he was accustomed to and presumably comfortable with. George Shultz, on the other hand, had had considerable management experience and he had been a cabinet secretary (Labor and Treasury and OMB director); he also had taught labor relations and had worked as a CEO in a corporation. So he had vast management experience and it made quite a difference.

Q: People I have interviewed give Shultz great marks as the best rounded, most appreciated Secretary of State. Baker had great strengths; he handled the extremely difficult process of the breaking up of the Soviet Union.

OAKLEY: And unification of Germany, the Gulf War, and the Madrid Conference. I don't think he wanted to get involved in the Balkans at all in 1991 as the presidential campaign was getting under way and that may have been a big mistake. Against his personal wishes, I believe, he resigned as Secretary of State and took over Bush's struggling campaign, trying to focus on domestic issues more than the international ones.

Q: He was also strangely absent at the beginning of the Gulf War. He came a little late.

OAKLEY: I wasn't in the Department at that time so I really cannot comment.

Q: He was a superb negotiator assisted by an extremely competent team. Madeleine Albright did not have that.

OAKLEY: That's right, his skill coming possibly from his experience as a lawyer and as President Reagan's Chief of Staff. I don't believe Albright knew how to use the competent professionals she had in the bureaus. Kissinger was probably the best at this, assembling his crack team all from within the Department. There was no effort on her part to reach down into the bureaucracy and establish links. Her coterie was very critical of career officers. It is one of the major reasons why her relationship with the Foreign Service deteriorated and morale fell.

I asked Secretary Albright to pay INR a visit. As a Deputy, I had asked Larry Eagleburger when he was Secretary and he came to talk to new analysts, who were thrilled. But she never did. I had another problem as I wanted to bring the real experts with me for briefings. Now I have always considered myself a "quick study" but I felt it was better to have the real experts on hand if questions arose I could not handle, rather than having to get back later with the information. After a few dubious looks at new briefers, it was clear she wanted the assistant secretary only to do the briefings. It did not bother me to have one of my staff give a briefing. My job was not to know everything; my job was to get the information to those who needed it.

I noted that when President Bush came to the Department right after his inauguration to be briefed before his trip to Mexico, Powell asked four desk officers to do the briefing. That was the right thing to do for the detailed issues involved but novel for the Department after Albright.

I was used to State Department meetings when the secretary would turn to the INR representative and ask whether there was any new information or comment from intelligence. I went to lots of meetings with Albright on major issues, often in regard to Bosnia; she would turn to the regional assistant secretary to start the discussion but never called on anyone else. I would carefully listen and if I felt something really wrong or if there were other points of view that should be aired, I would raise my hand to enter the conversation but it was hard to be recognized. It was an odd process to me. We hardly ever used the Secretary's conference room; rather Albright would hold her meetings in her back office that was more like a crowded living room. There was no request for attendees to express their opinions; so she usually heard from one speaker and often that was it. The meetings were not well run.

I should mention that the Secretary held a grudge against, Ed Abington, the Principal Deputy, for remarks he made when he left Jerusalem where he had served as Consul General. She could not forget that. In the spring of 1998 I began to get hints from Elaine Shocas that perhaps it would be wise to change deputies. I asked for reasons; I said I would be willing to change if there was a good reason but I never got one. I think the Secretary was reminded of the incident if she saw Ed, and would raise it with Elaine Shocas. It infuriated me to see that kind of approach to personnel. I tried to get an appointment with Elaine so that we could have an extended conversation about the problem, but she would not even call me back. It was staggering!

In the summer of 1998, I was asked to chair the panel considering promotions oFSO-1s to OC (or into the senior Foreign Service). That was an eight week task; one of the most important promotion panels in the system. Uneasy about leaving Ed in the Secretary's line of sight, I asked Tom Pickering whether I should go off to chair this panel. Tom told me that for the sake of the Foreign Service I had to go on the panel. So I did that. Toward the end of the eight weeks, our embassies in Dar Salaam and Nairobi were bombed. Those events raised lots of questions about intelligence and then we bombed the pharmaceutical plant in the Sudan as well as training camps in Afghanistan. This, as you will remember, elicited a long article in The New York Times by Jim Risen, raising more questions about intelligence.

I came back to INR right away and it was an uncomfortable situation. Tom Pickering told me the Secretary did not like the analyses that had been coming from INR. I asked Tom what to do about the problem and whether I should go see the secretary to talk about her unhappiness. He said, "No; talk to me." I asked him whether he had a specific example of an analysis that fell short so that we could learn from it. Then Tom asked me whether I didn't want to change deputies. This all happened toward the end of the summer 1998.

During the fall, I think in an effort to improve her intelligence briefings, I was finally invited to be a part of the early morning CIA briefing. In fact, as I mentioned, it had not really been a briefing, but rather the delivery by a mid-level CIA official of the President's Daily Briefing (PDB) paper as well as other CIA reports which the secretary read. As I also mentioned, I didn't know what was in those documents; I went over our material before going to this daily meeting, but that was not the same as knowing what the secretary was reading. It was hard to discuss what our analysis was as compared to CIA's and what should be done about any differences. I was supposed to have a few minutes alone with the secretary every day just before the CIA briefer showed up, but the secretary decided that she would see us together. So I would just sit there while the secretary read the CIA material. Sometime, I did not agree with the comments made by the CIA briefer and tried to offer comments, but was told not to interrupt. The whole process was totally unsatisfactory.

The secretary had not had overseas government experience and therefore I did not feel she had a good feel for the adequacy of CIA sources. We who have worked overseas have learned to look at some sources with considerable skepticism. But the secretary seemed to accept CIA information unconditionally; she loved anything that was clandestine or which was reported by national technical means. She didn't really read a lot of other material as far as I could tell. She liked the "inside hot stuff:" but I thought it skewed her view of events.

I had heard a funny story on this issue. People who worked for the Secretary right after she went to the UN said that if you wanted her to know something, you had to make sure that someone else reported it. When it was picked up by intercepts she would read it!

Q: It is too bad because when she was first appointed many of us were cheering for her and looking forward to a different secretaryship. Christopher must have been a cold, distant lawyer.

OAKLEY: Frankly, I found the sessions with her very uncomfortable and I was relieved when she decided that she didn't want me to attend the daily CIA briefings. I think if she had kept 5-10 minutes at the beginning of the day for INR's intelligence, it would have been much more effective and provided some context. I felt she was never comfortable with me and clearly did not seek my views. At the same time I was working easily with everyone else at State and the larger IC (Intelligence Community) - they all seemed to esteem our work, with good give-and-take. People in CIA, the Pentagon, and the NSC all told me consistently that our analysis was the best in government. We had the advantage of all-source intelligence and very good analysts and editors, and we all took great pride in that.

The situation did not improve over time. There were more hints about Abington to the effect that I should get rid of him. I will admit that I grew angrier and angrier over this and dug in my heels - I was determined that unless some justifiable cause were presented to me which I could discuss with him, I was not about to try to push Ed out. I thought it was a despicable way to handle a personnel issue, one involving a respected senior officer whose only offense had been to say something that could be seen as criticizing the Secretary.

Q: Was Ed aware of his situation?

OAKLEY: I assumed he was aware of all of it. He and I had a close working relationship, although we did not discuss this effort to remove him from INR. Perhaps I should have. Everyone else in the bureau's front office was aware of Ed's situation. After I retired, when Don Keyser, who was Abington's successor, was dismissed because of a security incident and the new assistant secretary, Stapleton Roy, because of it resigned and retired, everyone in the bureau kept telling me that history repeated itself!

In early 1999 I came to the conclusion that I did not want to stay in the job. The whole atmosphere was just too uncomfortable. I was approaching my 65th birthday, which meant that unless I retired soon, I probably could not start a part-time career, such as teaching. In any case, I was increasingly put off by the way Albright was running the Department. The Secretary obviously was not happy with me as the head of INR. That was clear when Mort Halperin, who had been brought in to head the Policy Planning Staff and who was, I believe an old friend of Albright's, came to see me and told me that he had been asked to remake INR. I found that disconcerting but was curious to know what needed changing. What did she want? I told him that I would cooperate fully and help him in any way I could. It turned out that the first thing he wanted to do was change the bureau's name, and he had several suggestions. I was amazed - we could easily have done it, even if it was a nuisance, but that was hardly a major remaking of rethinking of INR's work and mission. What a way to run a railroad!

Mort and I did have other discussions about INR from time to time; I would throw out some ideas and he always said he would get back to me; but he never did. It was a ludicrous effort. It also turned out that the secretary wanted longer reports, which we were certainly more than happy to do. It was the opposite of what we had always assumed: i.e. that busy people on the seventh floor did not have time for lengthy analyses. So we started doing that; it was the kind of guidance that I had been seeking for a long time - and it was helpful.

Things began to fall into place. Tom Pickering told me the Secretary wanted to bring Stapleton Roy, Ambassador to Indonesia, to INR and I told him this was the perfect time for me to retire from the Foreign Service. I have never had to speak to Madeleine Albright since.

Abington was told to leave in June 1999 - he was given a cubby hole down the hall while he figured out what to do next. He felt that he could not get another assignment while Albright was secretary. Tom Pickering, of course, worried what could be done to keep Ed; he thought quite highly of him. I had to wonder why he hadn't done more earlier on and had the feeling that Tom was rather powerless at this stage of the game; the coterie had taken over all management of the Department, even as it distanced itself from the bureaucracy. I felt very sorry for Ed Abington because he was a very good officer and had done an outstanding job in Jerusalem, fostering understanding with Palestinians, and working with the Palestinian Authority to try to bring it around in the peace process. He also had done a good job in Pakistan as political counselor and then DCM. His departure was a real loss for the Foreign Service.

I liked Don Keyser, Ed's replacement, very much. He was a China expert; he had served several tours there and he spoke Chinese. He had been the director of Chinese affairs and had worked very closely with Stapleton Roy on a number of assignments and he also had had some assignments outside East Asia. I think he was pleased to come to INR and I found him very witty and savvy in his dealings on all sorts of internal management issues. We got along famously and I could not have been more delighted with that selection - and I thought he would be very good for INR. After my departure I was really sorry when he became the "scapegoat" of a security incident in which a laptop computer filled with classified information was left unattended in a secure office and stolen. In the end he was completely exonerated, but he lost a lot before that happened. Roy resigned when Keyser was dismissed by Secretary Albright; he also had come to feel he should look elsewhere for future employment. Here again, the process with Albright was disagreeable.

Looking back, there were two things that I found unforgivable during Madeleine Albright's tenure. One was the collapse of the morale in the State Department. I was shocked to hear what young officers were saying in the halls; one proclaimed his loathing for Madeleine Albright. I had never heard comments like that in the Foreign Service. We lost a lot of good officers during her tenure.

The other was her failure to use INR properly. I think INR provided excellent service - both in the dissemination of material and in analysis - and we maintained very good, productive relationships with all the bureaus and others on the seventh floor and throughout the intelligence community. I would not have served in a higher position without my own intelligence office. I felt hurt for INR and sorry that INR did not have the influence it might have.

Q: Were you picking up unhappiness with Albright in other parts of the intelligence community?

OAKLEY: To some extent. Tom Pickering and I periodically went out to CIA to have long discussions with George Tenet on a whole series of operational issues. On one occasion, George opened the meeting by saying Mort Halperin had come out to see him because he had been given the task of remaking INR. I said I thought it was a crazy idea at that stage - the administration had been in power for six years and it was hardly the time to reorganize, but I said I had told Mort I would cooperate with him in any way possible. Further, I doubted Congress would go along - there were other things for Congress, as well as the administration, to spend its time on. George said he agreed. As I mentioned, I had known of the Halperin assignment, but Tenet's comment raised my ire once again, because of the way it was being done - out consulting others without really coming to INR.

In any case, by the time I was leaving, Roy was ready to succeed me. There was to be a short overlap; I was planning to leave by the end of July, which I did in order to take the retirement course. The timing worked out well.

Q: You retired in 1999.

OAKLEY: That's right. I had a wonderful retirement ceremony with Strobe Talbott doing the honors. There were nice letters, certificates, and medals from all parts of the intelligence community. CIA gave me its highest award. My five grandchildren were at the ceremony - Josephine, at two, fell and split her lip and had to be picked up and comforted by Strobe Talbott. Later, my oldest grandson commented to one of his friends that I got so many medals! And that was the way my twenty-five years in the Foreign Service ended.

Colin Powell's assumption of the role of the Secretary of State has been nothing short of spectacular. He immediately knew how to say the right things. I think the briefing that he held for the President's first trip to a foreign country, to Mexico, was indicative of a new attitude. Bush came to the Department and addressed Foreign Service officers. He said that he wanted to be briefed for his trip to Mexico by the desk officers - I am sure that was at the urging of the secretary. He said he wanted to hear from the people who really knew the situation on the ground. So four young desk officers conducted the briefing. I heard later that the president raised an issue that no one else in the room knew anything about, except for one of the desk officers. The president and this young officer had a conversation without interruption from any one else. When word of this meeting got around, morale soared in the Department. Other young officers were proud that some of their colleagues met with the president and they all thought, I am sure, that it might happen to them. It gave them a sense of importance that had been lacking for many years. It was terrific. The President remarked that during the airplane incident with China, it was clear to him that the Department and Colin Powell were taking the lead and that the issue was being handled well and quietly through diplomacy. I thought that expressed appreciation was a very welcome change.

Q: Do you have the impression that Powell had been told that the Department had suffered under some terrible management and that a rescue mission was in order?

OAKLEY: Absolutely. During the transition there were loads of panels, task forces, working groups meeting all over town to generate ideas for the Department's renaissance. The best one, I think, was chaired by Frank Carlucci, who started his illustrious career as a Foreign Service officer. Working with the Council on Foreign Relations and CSIS, he kept his panel very focused. The report starts with some large sweeping generalizations, emphasizing that the President has to designate the Secretary of State as his spokesperson on foreign policy. That is what Bush did. Then the report recommended that the NSC assume again its role as coordinator - which was its original raison d'ï¿½tre - rather that the maker or implementor of foreign policy. It pointed out that the secretary and his Department was responsible for making recommendations on policy, for the president's decision. Furthermore, the secretary and his Department were to be the principal implementor of policies approved by the President.

I think that is a particularly important point, because when I was working on refugee affairs, I would often see NSC staff members lusting to take over actual operations. It was never the same thing twice, however, and therefore there was no overall operational consistency. Such NSC action impeded coordination within the Department because, instead of having a coordination meeting in the Department beforehand, representatives of each involved office or bureau would traipse over to the White House without having had an opportunity to talk to each other first. I grew up in the age of Phil Habib who, when there was a crisis, would convene a coordinating meeting and made sure that all parts of the Department were working from the same script. If there was a subsequent meeting at the NSC, all State officials knew what the Department's position was.

The Carlucci report went on to say that it considered the Department to be outdated and dysfunctional in many ways. In certain respects that situation was caused by the lack of adequate resources. So the report urged the new secretary to enter into a bargain with Congress, calling for reform of the Department in exchange for additional resources. Everyone knows the personnel problems - entry, pay, training, career paths - where there is a lot of work to be done. State's technological information systems are completely outdated. We all hear the stories of people joining the Department after having worked in private business who are astounded by how outdated the Department's systems are. Then there is the question of the insecurity and shabbiness of our institutions abroad.

I think Colin has launched efforts to address all of these weaknesses. Of course there is no guarantee of success because Congress has to appropriate resources, even to start some of the reforms. Someone close to the secretary recently told me that Powell had commented that when he came to the Department that he had, of course, heard that the management was in bad shape, but that he had had no idea how bad it really was.

I am delighted to see the changes he is making. I am having a wonderful time, I must say, in retirement. I taught at Mount Holyoke last spring; I am teaching one course at SAIS this fall. I am still involved with lots of boards and studies, working with the U.S. Committee for the UN Population Fund. I am very involved with Northwestern University. So I lead quite a wonderful life, fuller than I had imagined, and I look back on my career with no regrets.

Q: In retrospect, what comments do you have on things that went well and things that did not go so well in the State Department?

OAKLEY: Bob and I have always said that we enjoyed every posting we ever had - usually for different reasons. We loved the Sudan in 1958-60. It was our first post and our honeymoon. The gentleness and kindness of the Sudanese are unforgettable as well as the many friends we made there. We liked Abidjan; we were able to use our French. It was hard with two little children, as medical care then was not as it is now. But it was a wonderful experience - the Francophone world. Then Bob went to Vietnam; that was not easy. I lived in Shreveport, Bob's home, because my father had retired after a heart attack and my parents had moved to California. Shreveport was where Bob had grown up and his family knew everybody in town. Living there was as easy as it could be with two small children and a husband far away. There was, of course, loneliness and other problems without my husband. But I probably would never have gone back to work without the opportunity Shreveport's Centenary College gave me to do some teaching, even though I did not have a Ph.D. I hustled hard and worked at it and enjoyed it, as I think my students did. It was nice to discover I still had a brain that I could use.

Then we went to Paris - heavenly for me, rather dull for Bob - and on to New York, where I had a part-time job as a consultant in the NGO world - the national board of the YWCA. That job was a great introduction to the non-profit world and how it operated but New York was hard; we didn't have parents close by for weekends. In those days there was no housing allowance and to take our children out of the city we had to maximize family vacations, friends in the country, and lots of weekend activity. My little bit of income came in very handy.

It was terrific when Bob was offered the job in Beirut as political counselor, working foBill Buffum. I think for our family that was our easiest, nicest assignment. We had a spacious apartment; servants were plentiful; the children could walk to school along the Cornish overlooking the Mediterranean; Bob walked to the embassy. I audited a Turkish history course at AUB and I got involved with the American Women's Club. We traveled a lot; there was also skiing, tennis, and a beach chalet. We had loads of Lebanese friends. They were warm, hospitable, and lively and they are still our friends to this day.

In 1974, Bob came back to work for the Policy Planning Staff and then went to the NSC staff to replace Hal Saunders when Hal went to the Department to head NEA. And finally went to work as a Foreign Service officer - sixteen years after resigning to marry.

I look back on most periods with certain regrets, because there were things I might have done better or differently. For example, I wish I had studied more Arabic in Khartoum. I had the time. It was not easy to do because there were no courses and tutors were not well organized, but I could have made some progress. I am sorry that I did not insist on a higher grade when I returned to the Foreign Service in light of all the experience I had had. I have always been somewhat amazed I came back in as the oldest living FSO-7.

Someone recently asked me the question of what might have happened to my career if I hadn't been forced to resign when I married, or if I hadn't married. Those possibilities had really not occurred to me - and I gave a lot of thought to my answers. I think I would have had a good career, but I don't think it would have been as rich and rewarding, and varied, as it turned out to be. I know my life certainly would have been different and probably harder. I like to think that I helped Bob in his career and I know he helped me.

Q: Of course, a mother spending full-time with her children can not be duplicated; it is awfully important.

OAKLEY: I don't regret those years that were devoted to Bob's career and our children. Those 16 years I was out of the Foreign Service were not dull and boring - we were moving from one continent to another every two years and it was hard on our children. By the time I returned to the State Department, our daughter was entering the National Cathedral School and our son went to junior high school. Perhaps my re-entry was difficult in another way, as our family was used to my doing everything. I think we really would have had problems moving every two years if I hadn't been there at home all the time in the early years.

Q: There just isn't a totally satisfactory way to have both a career and a family, particularly in the Foreign Service.

OAKLEY: You're right. I have given advice to women who have come to me with questions about Foreign Service life - that going into the Foreign Service is a career; it is not just a job and it is certainly not a 9:00 to 5:00 job. Entertaining and enjoying meeting people socially is important, as well as writing reports and staying late to get them out. All of these requirements are important, even essential. The Foreign Service must be seen as a way of life, not just a job.

I look back with wonder about how my life evolved. I would never have thought, in the summer of 1957, that I would be involved in all the issues I did deal with - the Middle East, the PLO and the UN, the Panama Canal treaty and its debate in the U.S., being a cultural affairs officer in Kinshasa, the Afghanistan desk, and deputy spokesperson - then to go into the intelligence area and population and humanitarian affairs and twice an Assistant Secretary. There is no central theme; all of the assignments were so different. Many of the opportunities came as a complete surprise; that is, people came to me to see whether I would be interested in doing such and such. But I think it all worked out superbly, with great good luck. To me, one of the greatest pleasures in the Foreign Service was being challenged by a new activity or a new job, and the fact that you don't stay in one job long enough to grow weary of it. You may not be an expert, but you approach new challenges with a wide range of knowledge and experience. For example, I had never known much about the intelligence community and process, but I did know something about how its product is used and that was a great help. In summary, I feel very, very lucky and satisfied with my Foreign Service life experience.

End of interview